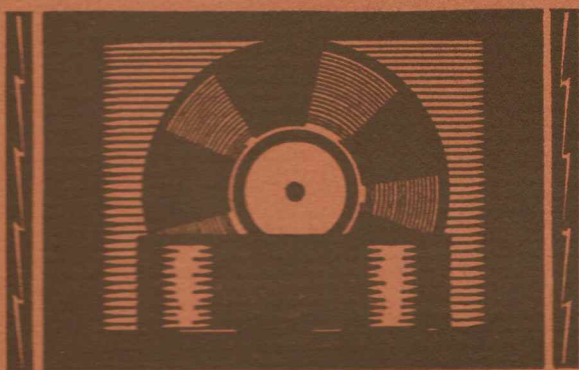


THE RECORD CONNOISSEUR'S MAGAZINE

THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER

Edited by PETER HUGH REED



FEBRUARY

1939

Articles by— DAVID EWEN - WILLIAM W. JOHNSON

Portrait Insert— WALTER GIESEKING

RECORD NOTES & REVIEWS -- OVERTONES

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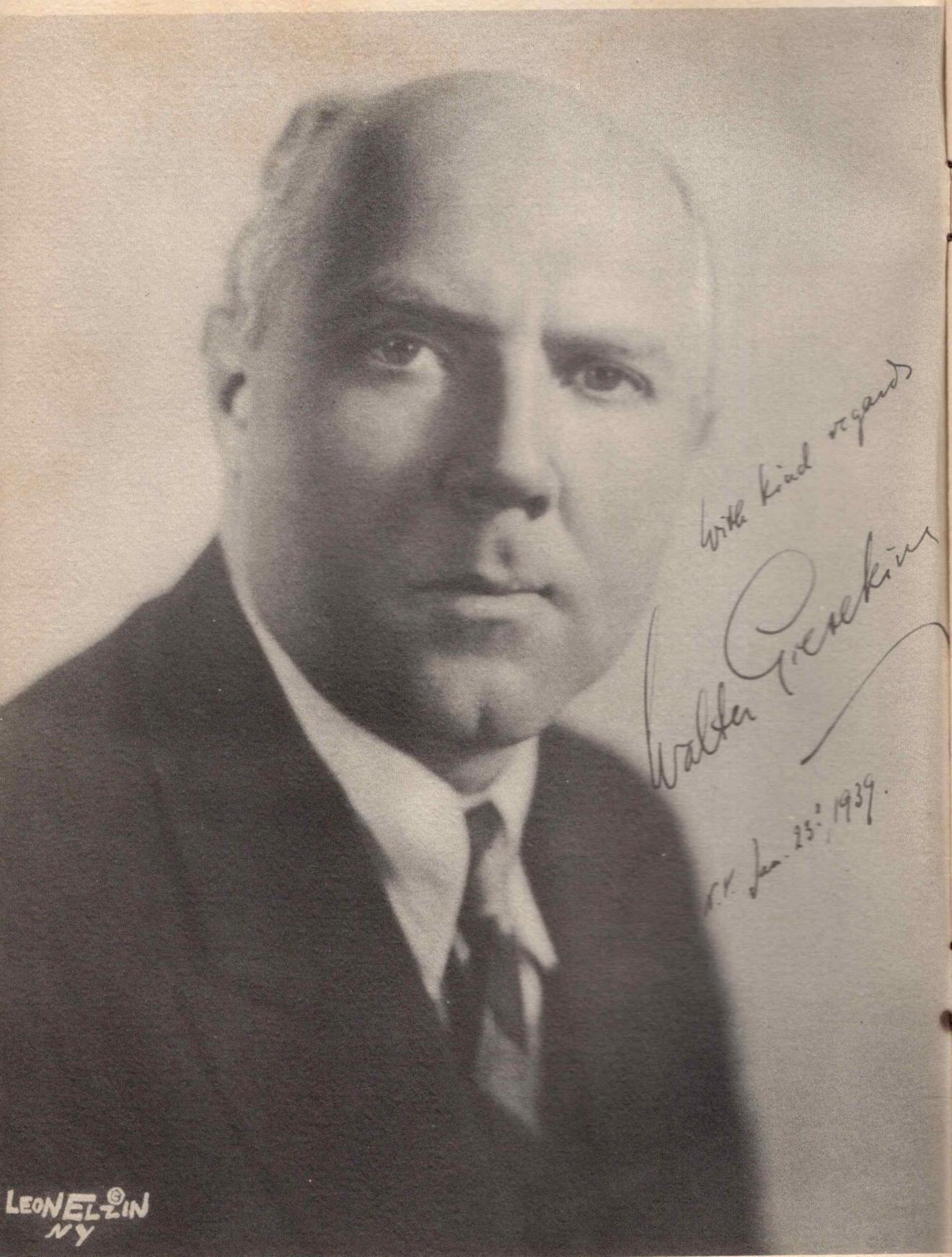
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With kind regards

Walter Greenkin

N.Y. Jan. 25, 1939.

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Inserts: Prominent Musical Personalities — Past and Present

No. 15 — WALTER GIESEKING

(These pictures are for framing at the wish of the reader. They should be cut apart with a knife.)



THE DEATH OF A MUSICAL CITY

DAVID EWEN

THE DESPATCHES WHICH FOLLOWED THE annexation of Austria by Germany carried three lines that were of far greater significance than appeared at first glance. "Significant of the new order of things," they read, "was the switch of café music from Viennese waltzes to German martial airs."

The change from Viennese waltzes to German martial music is not in itself of first importance. It is significant as one symptom of the end of an epoch as far as musical Vienna is concerned — an epoch the like of which the history of music cannot duplicate.

Nazi domination in Vienna soon resulted in Nazi music and Nazi musicians. It resulted for Vienna in the apotheosis of the esthetic principles first set down by the *Kulturkammer* of Berlin in 1933, in which music by Jews or music of an experimental or original nature was condemned, and only "Aryan" music reflecting the chauvinistic ideals of the German people was encouraged. Under such a banner, the music forces in Vienna were regimented without much delay. A style of music as ponderous and rigid as the goose-step of a Nazi army, has been substituted for another the buoyancy and spirit of which earned it for a century and a half the happy descriptive adjective of *flott*. Viennese music yielded to Nazi music. That meant the death of the greatest musical city in history — before our very eyes.

To appreciate the tragedy of this death, it is necessary to recall what Vienna has meant to the world of music during two hundred years. It was the home of some of the greatest composers of all time, ever since the raw winter day of 1736 when Christoph Willibald

Gluck, then a young peasant boy of twenty-two, came from Bohemia to establish his home in the Austrian capital. Mozart, Haydn, Schubert, Beethoven, Brahms, Hugo Wolf, Bruckner, and Mahler — supplemented by such lesser masters as Dittersdorf, Robert Volkmann, Joseph Lanner, and the two Johann Strausses—lived for the major part of their lives in Vienna and found that city an endless source of exhilaration and inspiration. What the second Johann Strauss, the composer of the *Beautiful Blue Danube Waltz*, once said about Vienna has often been expressed — more succinctly and less poetically, perhaps, but not less enthusiastically — by almost every great composer who lived in Vienna. "If it is true that I have talent, I owe it, above everything else, to my beloved city, Vienna In its soil is rooted my whole strength, in its air float the melodies which my ear has caught, my heart has drunk in, and my hand has written down My Vienna, the city of Song and Spirit, which sets the boy lovingly upon his feet and upon the mature man ever lavishes her sympathies"

To Vienna — Mecca of the music-world for more than a century and a half — the great composers of the world came to imbibe its atmosphere and to become, at least temporarily, a part of a great music centre. The early Italian composers almost all gravitated to the Austrian capital, among them Antonio Caldara, Paisiello, Cimarosa, Sarti, Jommelli — men of great importance in the history of Italian opera. Meyerbeer was in Vienna early in his career (1814) to complete his music-study and to assist in the production of one of his early comic-operas,

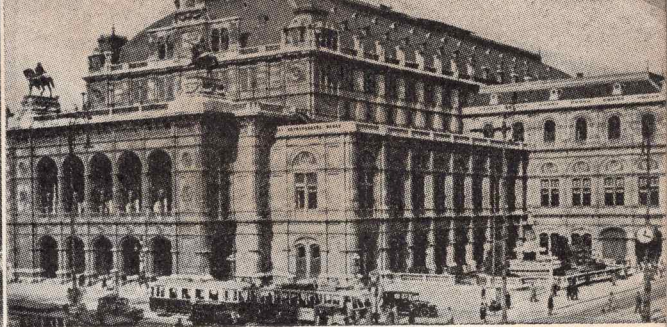


Beethovenhaus

Beethoven's House

Alimelk; in Vienna, Meyerbeer received the advice and encouragement of Kapellmeister Antonio Salieri, which helped bring him to a permanent career as a composer of serious Italian operas. In 1822, Rossini, then at the height of his fame, spent four months in Vienna to be accorded an idolatrous reception. During his last few days in Vienna he composed a quick-step for military band which, seven years later, was to be converted into the famous march of *William Tell*. Anton Rubinstein, launching his artistic career, starved in Vienna (after having appeared there as a successful child-prodigy), but returned to the city almost fifteen years later to attend the world première of his opera *Kinder der Heide* and to be hailed by the critics as Beethoven's worthy successor. Richard Wagner lived in Vienna for three extended periods: as a music-student in 1832, as an exiled revolutionary in 1848, and as a world-famous musician in 1875. During one of these sojourns Wagner was busily engaged in the composition of *Die Meistersinger*, and, wrote one critic, Alfred Orel, "it should not be too much to say that Wagner's residence in Vienna was an essential factor in the creation of the *Meistersinger*." Robert Schumann lived in Vienna for a year, composed there his *Faschingsschwank aus Wien*, and was instrumental in plucking from obscurity many Schubert manuscripts which had been collecting dust, among them the *C major Symphony*. A few years later, Schumann returned to Vienna with his wife, Clara, and gave four monumental concerts of his own music. What would one not give today to have been present at the third of the four concerts, at which Schumann conducted his own *Symphony in B flat Major*, and led the orchestral accompaniment to his piano concerto with Clara Schumann as soloist, and, finally, the young Anton Rubinstein joined Clara Schumann in the performance of the *Andante and Variations*, for two pianos?

Chopin and Liszt both first attracted attention to their genius in Vienna. Liszt, a child of eleven, made his debut before an audience that included Beethoven, who at the close of the concert is said to have picked up the wonder-boy in his arms and kissed him.



The State Opera House

It was his incredible success in Vienna some years later, in 1838, that determined Liszt to devote himself to the piano as a career. Chopin not only made historic concert appearances in Vienna, in which — though he was only nineteen — he featured some of his own works, but he also composed there several of his most famous études and mazurkas.

Smetana and Dvorak made such frequent pilgrimages from their native Bohemia to the Austrian capital that they were as familiar to the music-audiences of Vienna as to those of Prague. Tschaikowsky's extended stay in Vienna brought about in that city the world première of his violin concerto. Jacques Offenbach was in Vienna many times to assist in the production of his comic operas, and during the Carnival of 1864 was instrumental in turning Johann Strauss towards the compositions of operettas. And Jan Sibelius of our own day completed his study of music in Vienna under Karl Goldmark and Robert Fuchs, and composed there two early works which first attracted attention to his name — an orchestral overture, and an octet.

Vienna, as the scene for world-première performances, has written more than one chapter in musical history. For Vienna, Cimarosa composed his fragile masterpiece, *Il Matrimonio Segreto* (one of the cornerstones of comic opera), and in Vienna, it achieved its first fame. The historic Burg-theater saw the first performance of Gluck's *Orfeo*, which, as history records, brought about the decline of the Italian opera tradition in Vienna, and the birth of the music-drama. Music-drama received new impetus with the world's first performance in Vienna of Gluck's *Alceste*. It reached further development when Beethoven's *Fidelio* was first introduced and then revived, in its many transformations, in Vienna; and it achieved culmination with Weber's *Euryanthe*, composed expressly for Vienna and introduced with great success at the Theater-an-der-Wien. From Weber, the road of the music drama led straight to Wagner.

In the palaces of Vienna the modern symphony and string quartet saw their birth under the direction of their first great composer, Esterhazy's Kapellmeister, Joseph Haydn. New horizons for the symphony loomed at Beethoven's first public concert in Vienna in 1800, featuring his first symphony. They were reached with the first performances of the fifth, seventh and ninth symphonies of Beethoven, the great *C major Symphony* of Schubert, and still newer ones achieved with the world premières in Vienna of the third and fourth symphonies of Brahms, and the greater symphonies of Bruckner and Mahler.

The merry evenings of musical entertainment at the home of the Viennese music lover, Joseph Sonnleithner, saw the introduction of the Romantic lied. There the greatest of Schubert's songs, including the *Erkönig*, were introduced to a small group of music lovers, and incidentally to the world of music as well. New vistas for light music were also opened in Vienna when the first performances of the great waltzes of Joseph Lanner and the two Johann Strausses took place in the leading cafés, and with the première at the Theater-an-der-Wien of Johann Strauss' operetta, the *Fledermaus*.

Paganini and Jenny Lind both witnessed in Vienna what was probably one of the great triumphs of their great careers; in Vienna, Paganini made his first appearance out of Italy. Paganini came to the Austrian capital in 1828, a few months before the death of Franz Schubert. The enthusiasm which marked his first concert at the Redoutensaal verged on hysteria. "The audience was hypnotized," reported the *Theaterzeitung*. Castelli, the Viennese dramatist, wrote: "Never has an artist caused such a great sensation within our walls as this God of the violin After the first two concerts, there was only one name — his — on all lips. It was as though political, art, society and city news held no interest for people, for over everything else they became dumb, and only Paganini was the subject of thought and conversation." Franz Schubert, who heard Paganini's first Viennese concert, said: "I have heard an angel sing." Paganini was, in short, the man of the hour. A famous Viennese sweetmeat was now called *Auflaffy a la Paganini*; a good shot in billiards was termed a Paganini coup. His picture was featured on walking-sticks and snuff-boxes. Styles were named after him.

For Jenny Lind, her guest appearances in Vienna in 1846 marked her first flight to world fame. She made her Viennese debut at the Theater-an-der-Wien on April 22, 1846, in one of her greatest roles, that of Norma. She was a sensation. "I count the moment passed at her debut among the most enjoyable artistic pleasures I have ever yet experienced," wrote the editor of the *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*. Lind's fame soared and swelled in Vienna with subsequent performances in *La Sonnambula*, *Der Freischütz* and *Les Huguenots*. Like Paganini of twenty years previously, Jenny Lind became in Vienna a vogue and a craze. She was adored and imitated. At her final appearance, the Empress of Austria broke all court precedents by throwing a royal wreath at Jenny Lind's feet.

"I can find no words with which to describe my stay in Vienna," wrote Jenny Lind on May 23, 1846.

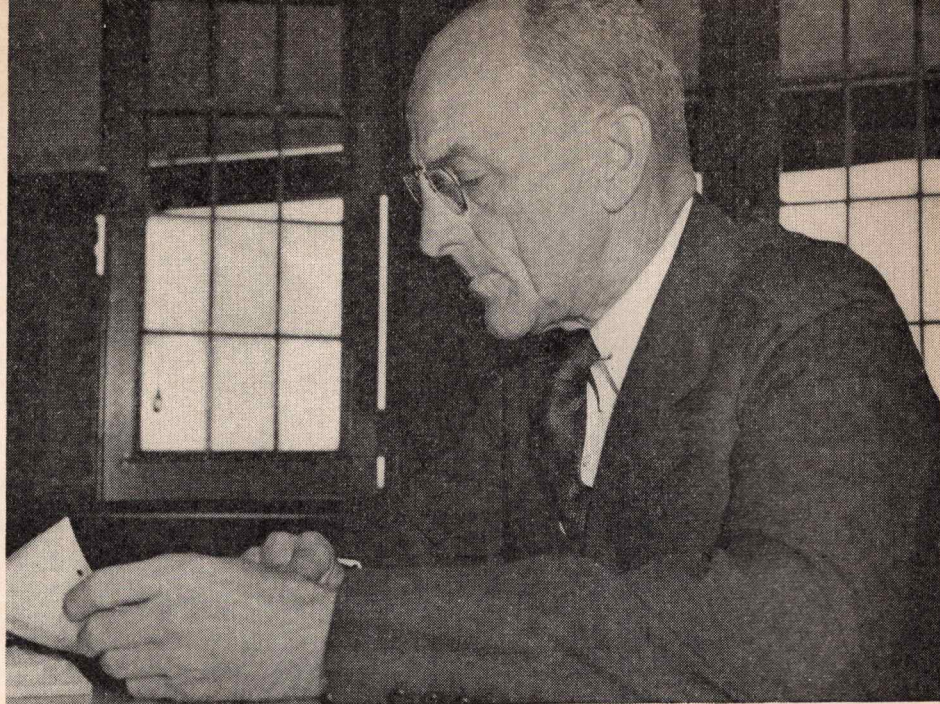
In Vienna, such present-day masters of musical interpretation as Fritz Kreisler, Moritz Rosenthal, Bronislaw Huberman and Ignace Jan Paderewski made their debuts; and in Vienna they received their first recognition. Vienna, too, witnessed the dusk of many great and proud careers, including that of Adelina Patti, whose farewell concert took place in that city. In Vienna, some of the greatest conductors emerged from comparative inexperience to world fame — Hans Richter, Gustav Mahler, Felix von Weingartner, Bruno Walter — conductors who raised the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and the Vienna State Opera to a position of first importance among the musical institutions of the world.

In Vienna, historic musical wars were waged. The Gluck-Metastasio, Mozart-Salieri battles of the eighteenth century yielded, one hundred years later, to the even more famous struggles between Brahms and Wagner and their supporters — struggles which split the music world into two camps.

But all this is now vanished glory. Musical Vienna, after the World War, declined rapidly from its former regal position. The Nazification of Austria was its death-knell. The Aryanization of Viennese music, which began almost immediately after the German troops occupied Austria, brought to a close the greatest epoch that musical history has known.

Death is never a pleasant spectacle. When it comes to a city which for two hundred years has carved musical history, it assumes the stature of a major catastrophe.

*George K.
Throckmorton,
President of
RCA-Victor*



THE EXECUTIVE VIEWPOINT

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH VICTOR'S PRESIDENT

WHEN ONE ENTERS THE OFFICE OF the President of RCA Victor, one is instantly struck with the atmosphere of cordiality. It immediately places the visitor at his ease. Mr. George K. Throckmorton sits at a table desk, from which he rises to greet his visitor with a friendly smile. His office is comfortable but not pretentiously furnished. There is none of the glamour of a Hollywood moving picture studio executive's headquarters, nor even a suggestion of the lavish executive offices common to large American corporations. A picture of the famous dog that has acted as Victor's trademark and mascot for so many years is on hand, and an old phonograph dating back at least thirty years or more lies on the table. These are the only symbols of the great enterprise governed from this office.

Mr. Throckmorton speaks with the friendly accent of the Middle Westerner; he was born on a farm in Indiana and, like many leading Americans, he attended a country school. Later, he went to both Purdue and Cornell Universities, specializing in technical studies.

His interest in technical subjects led him to radio, and as early as 1916 he was work-

ing in that field. At this time he was connected with Sears Roebuck and Company in Chicago. In 1922 he became a manufacturer's agent handling radio parts.

"My friends and family thought I was crazy," he said. "But I believed in radio. Even if static ruled the air waves, I was fairly certain that it would be conquered in time. After all, a man could not invent or discover the parts to comprise a radio without improving upon them everytime."

In 1926 Mr. Throckmorton joined the E. T. Cunningham radio tube company as an executive. Five years later he was with RCA Radiotron Company, and in 1933 he became executive vice-president of the RCA Victor Company, which two years later was consolidated with the other RCA interests and renamed the RCA Manufacturing Company. In early 1938 he was elected president of this organization. Mr. Throckmorton regards music as a vital force, with as many varied appeals as there are kinds of music. "Don't expect me to talk on music as you fellows do who make your living writing or lecturing about it," he said with a smile. "But I'm sold on its power and value just as I'm sold on a good golf

game or a horseback ride when time permits. Each activity in its way is beneficial to one's well-being. Sooner or later most people become aware of music's power in one way or another. I predict a renaissance of the phonograph in the next five years surpassing the greatest dreams of the industry. The novelty no longer exists. Today the phonograph is a genuine musical instrument."

"You speak of music as a power," we said. "Tell us, Mr. Throckmorton, something of how you discovered this. We are certain our readers will be interested."

"Some people pass music up, because, unable to give it the proper attention, they find it distracts them from things they regard as more urgent. That proves it's a compelling force. You might say that's putting the cart before the horse, but I regard it differently. I'd like to get the fellow who avoids music to put aside a bit of time to listen attentively to it, in some form or other. I'll bet he'd find it mighty worthwhile. There's no question that most of us find music essential to our well-being at some time or other."

"When did you first discover that music was an influence?" we asked.

"I was in my early twenties," he responded. "This was several years before the World War, when opportunities for hearing good music were very different from what they are today. The young folks of my youthful days did not have the radio to foster and develop interest in music. The best and even the most ardent music lovers were fortuitously developed then. Maybe it all began at home, because some people had parents who performed on instruments for their own amusement, or maybe it was started elsewhere. Generally speaking, the opportunities for hearing good music were relatively meager. Only a few large cities sponsored symphony orchestras. The old band concerts in the parks and elsewhere, usually heard on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, unquestionably awoke latent interest in music in those days. They were the incentive that formed a trail that eventually led, as to some Mecca, to a concert hall or an opera house in a big city, and even to the occasional local concert of a celebrity or perhaps the summer concerts of Chautauqua.

"I knew music as every boy knew it in my time—from the hymns we sang in Sunday school and the patriotic pieces we sang in day school. I daresay the singing of the hymns touched more deeply the well-spring of musical appreciation, yet hymn singing being reserved for the Sabbath, its influence waned during the week. My first electrifying

musical experience has to do with one of the bands of those days. It was entirely accidental. When I think back about it I always remember that it took a dramatic salesman to put music over in a truly compelling manner with me. This happened one night at Chicago in a beer garden, where I had repaired for a summer night's diversion. Creatore and his famous band were featured at this place, and it was Creatore's dynamic and persuasive music-making that made me realize how compelling music could be.

"Thereafter I went twice a week to hear this amazing leader and his equally amazing band. Music took on a new significance. Creatore had a way with him, as perhaps those who remember him will concede; he made almost everything he played an adventure for me, which is precisely what music should be, as you have told your readers upon more than one occasion.

"It was about this time that I became aware of the phonograph. Not that I did not know that it existed prior to this, but I suspect the phonograph comes to mean more when you go out and buy your first records for it yourself. Creatore had such a firm hold on my imagination that I naturally bought all his records immediately. Of course I bought some popular records and a few celebrity ones. But Red Seal records were most expensive in those days—three dollars for a single faced one, and some were even five and seven dollars. The music lover of today hardly realizes how much more he gets for his money when he buys a single Red Seal record. Besides paying less he gets more music—eight to nine minutes of music against three to four in those days, to say nothing of the great advance in reproduction.

"Naturally in the days when I bought my first records I never thought of being the head of a company distributing them. One never knows what destiny holds in store, nor which of the many things we handle in the course of a day may prove the dominating element of our life."

"Tell us something about the growth of the record business," we asked, as he paused and gazed outward through the leaden-paned window into the square park that lies before the executive buildings in Camden. "We carried an article on record sales last month. How near right were our estimates?"

"Well, I imagine that when the complete figures for the year of 1938 are compiled, we'll find your published figures bettered. The increase in our Red Seal business was considerably more than we anticipated. During

the last quarter of 1938, the red seal business was up 300% over the business of the last three months of 1937. This increase in the Red Seal business is gratifying to us, not alone as a matter of dollars and cents but because of the fact that it indicates we are bringing good music into more and more homes in this country."

"Is it true," we asked, "that the record business at Victor is regarded as all one unit?"

"No, that is not true. RCA Victor's record business is divided into three classifications—Red Seal, Black Seal and Bluebird. Each is regarded as a specific unit, and each accounts for its own earnings, etc."

"Is it true that the Black Seal or popular record business is the backbone of the industry?" we asked.

"We of Victor regard the Red Seal group as the basis of our business. Its growth in recent years has been enormous. As a matter of fact we issued this past year over one hundred sets, besides the many single or double record releases. That is why we feel justified in saying that our Red Seal catalogue is large and comprehensive. It covers every classification. For the average music lover, we are certain, it represents a veritable treasure house of the world's great music, interpreted by the greatest artists of past and present. For the musical scholar it contains countless recordings that are considered essential to a complete musical education. But in a field as immense and mobile as music it would be foolish to contend that our catalogue was entirely complete. We do not believe it would be possible for any one's catalogue to be complete. But we are doing our utmost to fill in with recordings of great compositions these open spaces in the various forms and catalogues of fine music which seem to need it most.

"This leads us to a consideration of the policy which determines what shall be recorded by Victor. Ours is a large business, with a large overhead expense, requiring large sales to support it. Lacking that support we could not remain in the record business. Our first consideration in making new recordings, therefore, is the question: "Will they enjoy a wide enough appeal to bring in the return necessary to our existence as a record manufacturer?"

"Quite naturally, the bulk of our catalogue consists of standard works which the mass of music lovers enjoy. The larger portion of our recording budget, therefore, is devoted

to new and technically more perfect recordings of these works. Within these broad limitations we record the best artists, under the best conditions, making use of the best equipment, that we can discover. We think that this is good business, for in this way we render service to the largest number of people in the United States.

"We think it is good business, also, to record as many of the fine works of limited appeal as possible. This we do to the extent of our working budget, once the main considerations have been met. And we have produced many things in this field which every reader of *The American Music Lover*, indeed every musically informed person, I am sure, regards with keen delight. It seems unnecessary to say that our own people take the greatest pleasure in exploring new fields and in fostering new composers and artists.

"The foregoing policy has been productive not only for us but for our many associates in the music business. Now that records are again enjoying such a successful sale, we are frequently reminded of the early days of this decade when many people gave them up for lost. We are hardly boasting when we say that the efforts of the RCA Victor organization, its dealers and distributors, were the principal factor in keeping the business alive. This was pointed out in the article by Mr. Larrabee last month which appeared in *The American Music Lover*. Not only he but many others have said that if RCA Victor had not carried the torch during those lean years, there would be no records, and consequently no record business today. Certainly if RCA Victor had not continued its program of research and development, its improvements in recording means and methods, the brilliant fidelity which we know today would still be many years off.

"In brief, and with complete candor, we have been the industry's main support for many years. Our resources, our advertising, our perseverance and our business policies have enabled dealers, distributors, musical publications and many others connected with the industry, to survive until better days arrived. And with better days came the enlargement of repertoire and the still further advancement in technique for which we ourselves, in common with music lovers, so earnestly strive.

"We have a definite responsibility to the great American public, one that we are endeavoring to meet fairly and squarely. Ours is not only a responsibility to the public, however, it is a responsibility to the artist. For, as Mr. David Sarnoff recently said,

while the great artists who make Victor records are our sternest taskmasters, they are also our inspiration.' It is not only for them to give us the best of their artistry, but it is for us to represent them as worthily as it is scientifically possible.

"Our responsibility to the American public grows yearly, and we are fully cognizant of this fact. That is why we have sought the advice and counsel of members of the staff of *The American Music Lover*, and invited their criticism as well as their readers' criticism. We are always interested in the wishes

and opinions of the readers of this magazine, many of whom, all unknowingly, have shaped Red Seal policies upon more than one occasion.

"The outlook for 1939 is particularly encouraging. Recent changes in our organization have been made which we feel will strengthen it. Under the capable leadership of Frank Walker, the new manager of the record section, our activities in Victor and Bluebird Records—as well as our activities in RCA Victorolas — will be greatly extended."

OVERTONES

■ IN THE JANUARY ISSUE OF ITS REPORTS, the enterprising Consumers Union of the United States, Inc., turns its attention for the first time to radio-phonograph combinations, with some side comments on needles and pick-ups.

In case our readers are unfamiliar with CU and its work, let us state that it is "operated on a strictly non-profit basis under the Membership Corporation Laws of New York State, and its income is derived from members' fees and from small contributions by members. It has no connection with any commercial interest." Its function is to conduct tests on all consumers' products. These tests are made by technicians on the regular staff of Consumers Union and outside consultants; among the latter are "more than 200 specialists selected for their competence and freedom from commercial bias in university, governmental and private laboratories."

As regards the ratings given in the January issue of *Consumers Union Reports*, outside consultants besides CU's own technical staff were responsible for the ratings. An independent technician, upon whose integrity the *American Music Lover* relies, considers these ratings highly important and has suggested that we bring them to the attention of our readers.

Speaking of the two types of record players on the market — the one wired into the radio with proper arrangement for switching from radio to phonograph, the other the "wireless" type — the CU *Report* states: "a

distinct disadvantage of the 'wireless' type is that fidelity of reception is limited by the radio tuner and by special circuits in this type of record player, as well as by the amplifier. In addition, models tested by CU showed that, apparently all design problems have not been properly solved."

As regards steel needles CU makes one of the most interesting and provocative statements we have ever seen in print: "an abrasive is incorporated in the record material to shape the needle to the groove." The usual contention is that an abrasive is used as a binder for various component parts of the material used in a record, and that this naturally wears the needle but not necessarily to shape it to the groove. "CU is advised," says the report, "that when sapphire or diamond-pointed needles . . . are used in pick-ups of the grade ordinarily built into commercial phonographs, they will eventually ruin the owner's records. The explanation of one technician is that the less-expensive pick-ups have a relatively stiff needle suspension, which causes the needle to exert considerable pressure against the walls of the groove of the record."

"Pick-ups considered satisfactory for use with permanent needles are comparable to laboratory equipment, and cost about \$125. Those used in the combinations listed can be bought for from \$3.00 to \$10.00 at mail-order prices."

Most phonophiles will agree that the problem of needles is a many-sided one. The

American Music Lover has published several articles on the subject, written in conjunction with several technicians, and one technical laboratory in New York not only endorses these articles but pays us the compliment of keeping them as reference for their many clients. The quality of reproduction from the needle, one of the weak links in phonographic reproduction, is not of chief concern in the *CU Reports*, only its wear on records. Among the needles tentatively recommended are Victor Full Tone steel, "Shadowgraphed" needles RCA chromium needles (green shank for 78 r. p. m. records) and Recoton needles.*

The report shows that choice of the radio-phonograph varies with one's requirements—according to location, to whether one wants short wave or not, and how much one wishes to pay. Also according to the standards of tone quality desired—that is, the quality of radio and phonograph reproduction. The ratings give the features of each model, indicate under which conditions each is most desirable and include comparisons of radio and phonograph tone quality.

CU states that radio-phonograph models are rated either on the basis "of listening tests by qualified technicians, supplemented by technical data on design," or "on CU's laboratory test data."

Typical ratings of the machines ** from *CU Reports* are:

Lafayette—Model BB-48, \$99.50 list price, (11-tube, a-c console radio-phonograph), Model BB-35, with record changer \$124.50 list price ("This combination is judged a 'Best Buy' for those who do not live near strong, high fidelity stations, and for those who want relatively good radio and phonograph tone but must also have short-wave reception.")

RCA Victrola Model U-126, \$155.00 with antenna and \$9.00 worth of records. Model U-128 with RCA automatic record changer is \$185.00. "Standard radio design—performance somewhat better than Lafayette BB-48; tone quality also better. Considered acceptable for the same conditions," but price is higher.

Magnavox Hepplewhite, \$145.00 with usual record player; \$170 with Garrard record changer. "Radio performance on broadcast band fairly good . . . Tone quality good, excellent bass response . . . Phonograph performance considered better than radio."

Philharmonic Futura Model, \$128.00 with bass and treble speakers. Cabinets extra—\$39.50 up. "A true high fidelity set for local reception from high-quality broadcast stations

only and a 'Best Buy' for those living in metropolitan areas near strong, high fidelity stations."

Several sets are listed as not acceptable.

Other brands rated include: Macy's Own, \$89.50; WQXR High Fidelity Radio, \$135.00, Scott Super XII, \$109.77; and Ansley Dynaphone, Model D-25, \$210.00.

CU Reports finds that the tone quality of the phonograph is "slightly superior" in the case of one combination and the "phonograph performance considerably better than radio" in the case of another combination. The radio performance of RCA Victrola U-128 is regarded as "somewhat better than Lafayette BB-48" and the tone quality also better. The Philharmonic Futura is rated as having the "best tone quality of any set rated except the Philharmonic Linear Standard."

CU's consultants judge four crystal pickups satisfactory. They are: Astatic Model O-7, price \$3.82; Shure Zephyr, price \$5.88; Garrard DeLuxe Crystal, price \$5.88; and Astatic Tru-Tan, price \$10.29.

In line with the above, the general consensus of opinion by technicians whom the editors of the *American Music Lover* have consulted is that crystal pickups are not as desirable as magnetic ones. In an early issue we expect to run an article on pickups by a well-known New York recording engineer.

Those who would be interested in further details can secure a copy of *Consumers Union Reports* for January by sending twenty-five cents in stamps or coin to the offices of *The American Music Lover*.

A Record Cleanser

The manufacturers of Recoton needles have a liquid record renewer on the market which acts both as a cleaner and as a record surface restorer. From reports received from several readers this Renewer has proved most helpful, not only in removing dust and grit but in eliminating noise from surfaces.

**The American Music Lover* does not feel that ordinary steel needles are to be recommended to those who value their records highly. "Shadowgraphed" (either RCA or Acton) and chromium needles if properly used are preferable. With most pickups of the commercial variety the Recoton and the similar Red Seal needles are subject to bad peaks in the higher frequencies, but the wear on the records in the case of the Recoton (the only one *The American Music Lover* has tested) is negligible.

**The machines named here have been heard and endorsed along similar lines by technical advisors of *The American Music Lover*.

European Record Releases

England

THE COLUMBIA HISTORY OF MUSIC BY EAR AND EYE, Volume 5 • *Music in the XXth Century*. Columbia discs DB1784 to 1791.

BEETHOVEN: *Emperor Concerto*, Op. 73, Moisevitsch and London Phil. Orch. HMV C3043-7.

TSCHAIKOWSKY: *Francesca da Rimini*, N. Y. Phil. Sym., dir. Barbirolli. HMV DB3658-60.

SMETANA: *Overture to The Bartered Bride*, Walter and London Sym. Orch. HMV DB3652.

WALTON: *Noche Espagnole* and *Siesta*, London Phil. Orch., dir. the composer. HMV C3042.

GADE: *Ossian Overture*, Hoeberg and Det Kongelige Kapel. HMV Z252.

RACHMANINOV: *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, Op. 43, Moisevitsch and London Phil. Orch., dir. Cameron. HMV C3062-4.

MENDELSSOHN: *Piano Concerto No. 1 in G mi.*, Ania Dorfmann and London Sym. Orch. dir. Goehr. Col. DX893-4.

BEETHOVEN: *Elf Wiener Tänze* and *Entr'acte from Egmont*; Weingartner and London Phil. Orch. Col. LX770-1.

MOZART: arr. Seitz: *L'épreuve d'amour*, Kurtz and London Phil. orch. Col. DX897.

HANDEL: *Concerti Grossi Op. 6*, Nos. 10, 11, 12, Boyd Neel String Orch. Decca X138-143.

GRIEG: *Holberg Suite*, and *Cowkeeper's Tune and Country Dance*. Same. Decca X144-6.

ARENSKY: *Trio in D mi.*, Op. 32, Joyce, Temianka and Sala. Parlo. E11386-8.

SCHUBERT: *Valses Nobles*, Op. 77, Lili Krauss. Parlo. R20429.

RAVEL: *Le Gibet*, and *La Vallée des cloches*, Walter Giesecking. Columbia LX772.

BACH: *Sonata in G major*, Louis Jensen (cello) and G. Werschenskaya (piano). HMV DB5224-5.

SIBELIUS: *Malinconia*. Same artists. HMV DB5223.

CHOPIN: *Andante Spianato and Grand Polonaise*, Op. 22, Louis Kentner. Col. DX895-6.

MAHLER: *Ninth Symphony*, Walter and Vienna Phil. Orch. HMV DB3613-22.

WOLF: *Der Musikant*, and *Der Freund*, sung by Herbert Janssen. HMV DA1672.

France

SCHUBERT: *Andantino varié*, Op. 84, No. 1, Heinz Jolles and Bernard Schulé. La boîte à musique disc 21.

LULLY: *Ouverture pour l'Amour Médecin*, and CLERAMBAULT: *Symphonia quarta*, Paris Conservatory Orch. dir. Fendler. Disc 22.

MOZART: *Serenata Notturna*, same artists. Disc 23.

JACOPO DA BOLOGNA: *A vous vierge de douceur*, and *Lux purpurata radiis*, Soprano, Tenor, Bass-trumpet, Hurdy-Gurdy, and Trombone. l'Oiseau Lyre disc 2.

BEETHOVEN: *Duet No. 2* in F for clarinet and bassoon. O. L. disc 4.

BARRAUD: *Trio* for oboe, clarinet and bassoon O.L. disc 6.

COUPERIN: *Air Sérieux* and *Brunette*, Lise Daniels (soprano). O.L. disc 10.

WEBER: *Andante et Rondo Hongrois*, Op. 35, for bassoon and orch. L.O. 14.

MOZART: 4th *Divertissement*. L.O. 15.

RIVIER: *Petite Suite*—for oboe, clarinet and bassoon; *Trio d'Anches* de Paris. HMV-DB5083.

CHOPIN: *Trois écossaises*, Op. 72, and *Mazurka in F maj.*, Op. 68, No. 3; *Nocturne in F major*, Op. 15, No. 2; *Raoul Koczalski*. HMV—DA4430.

DUPARC: *Extase*; *Sérénade Florentine*; and *Lamento*; sung by Chas. Panzera. HMV—DB5084.

DUPARC: *La vague est la cloche*; and *Testament*; sung by Chas. Panzera. HMV—DB5085.

• • •

A friend writes us from Paris that it is rumored that HMV is planning a new series of recordings from *Pelléas and Mélisande*, in which Maggie Teyte and Charles Panzera will be heard as the lovers.

Germany

MOZART: *Rondo in A mi.*, K.511; Elly Ney. Electrola DB4620.

MOZART: *Variations on a Theme of Gluck*; Lubka Kolessa. Electrola DB4621.

RACHMANINOFF: *Vocalise*, and YSAYE: *Reve d'enfant*; Ruggiero Ricci. Electrola DB4622.

COUPERIN: *Chaconne*, CHAMBONNIERES: *Volte*, and DAQUIN: *La Guitarre*, DANDRIEU: *Les Cascades*; harpsichord solos by Eta Harich-Schneider. Electrola DA4449.

HAYDN: *Symphony in D major*, B. & H. No. 104; Fischer and his Chamber Orch. Electrola DB4615-16.

Italy

GIORDANO: *Andrea Chenier, Come un bel di di Maggio*, and *Marcella, Dolce notte misteriosa*; sung by Tito Schipa. HMV DA5352.

TOSTI: *L'ultima canzone*, and DENZA: *Occhi di fata*; sung by B. Gigli. HMV DB3551.

PUCCINI: *Suor Angelica, Senz mamma, o bimbo*, and GIORDANO: *Fedora, Vedi, io piango* (duet with Ziliani); Augusta Oltrabella (soprano). HMV DB5351.

VERACINI: *Sonata in E mi.*, Thibaud and Janapoulo (violin and piano). HMV DB3111.

Record Collectors' Corner

WHAT GOOD ARE HISTORICAL RECORDS?

Arthur Waldeck*

■ I HAVE OFTEN AROUSED IN A FRIEND A lively curiosity to hear the Adelina Patti I have so glowingly praised, only to find him keenly disappointed at the playing of one of her records. I am in that situation not so much ashamed, although I know my friend's opinion of my judgment is not what it was a little while ago, as I am frustrated. Why doesn't he hear what I hear? Why does he hear what I choose to ignore? Has the sound coming from the phonograph really as little objectivity as the incident indicates?

Clearly the question of historical records needs examination, not only for the sake of those of us who love them, so that we may publish our hobby without fearing the thoughtful gaze of the incredulous, but also for others, to show them a new road to pleasure. I propose to leave entirely out of consideration collecting merely for its own sake.

It seems there are two basic questions in this matter, and the way we answer them determines our attitude towards historical records. The first question is, "How good are they?" (not now, "What good are they"), and the second is, "Were the singers of the

recent past so much better than today's as to warrant our taking the trouble to get their records?"

The acoustic records, to which category belong virtually all records we now call historical, present a pale shadow of the fleeting reality they claim to have fixed. The auditory range of the reality far exceeded their meager 250 to 2500 cycles (roughly); the loudness of the original is cut to little more than a whisper, or if we bring it up with modern means of amplification we may bring up along with it an almost intolerable amount of noise; and the changes in loudness of the original are reduced and confined within very narrow limits. Is it silly then, to put any faith in what acoustic records pass on to us of the voices that sang for them?

The fact alone that these records survived in the market and built up a big business shows that there was something in them that could hold the interest and stir the imagination. There is an interesting experiment that we can make to throw further light on this question. Play an acoustic record of, say, that excellent artist, Martinelli. Now play an electrical recording of the same singer. You will find that the voice is instantly recognizable as the same one. We see that the acoustic records really did reproduce some of the factors that make voices good.

These are vowel, voice movement (vibrato), rhythmic verve, diction (reproduced to a less satisfactory degree) and of course, pitch. Indeed, the two most important factors, vowel and regularity of movement, are sometimes very adequately reproduced.

On the other hand, as we know, the singers stood rather close to the recording horn, so that noises which were not ordinarily heard, such as breathing, were taken in. When the singer sang high and loud, he had to draw back from the horn, so as to avoid overloading the diaphragm. If he moved too far back, as often happened, the results were not as good as they might have been.

We may now have some idea of what we may expect from acoustic records, what we must forego, and what we must add from our knowledge. Let us turn now to the more difficult and controversial question, "Were the singers of the recent past better than the singers of today?"

RECORD COLLECTORS NEW LISTS

Obsolete and rare disc phonograph records - FREE. A different and better auction and exchange for the disposal of collector's surplus material.

DIXIE RECORD CLUB

36 N. E. First Street

Miami, Florida

*Mr. Waldeck, a well-known New York vocal teacher, will contribute other articles to the Record Collectors Corner in the future.

I don't hesitate to say they were. Thirty-five years ago there were at least a score of singers better than any one singing in public today. Let me name some who can be heard to advantage from the old records: Caruso, Slezak, Tamagno, Zenatello, Destinn, Melba, Gadski, Tetrizzini, Sammarco, Amato, Renaud, Schumann-Heink, Plancon, Journet. These were all singers of the first rank, varying much among themselves, to be sure, in the kind of expression they excelled in, but having in common a few characteristics that contemporary singers do not have.

They all sang big, with a free sweep and an incisive rhythm.

They all sang clear and firm, every tone, all the time.

Their tones were uniform from the bottom of the range to the top.

There was something exciting, arresting, communicative in the mere sound of their voices.

They not only let one hear words and music without effort on one's part, but they made one feel and live the words and music.

They did these things, all of them, without exception, and when they got through singing, people stood up and cheered.

It is tempting, I may say parenthetically, to speculate why, only a generation later, no one sings that way any more, but that is a matter for another time.

How much of the qualities just listed may be heard in historical records one can estimate from what was said above about the sound output of acoustic records. If you want to hear the best kind of singing you must turn to historical records, you must supply loudness, you must magnify sweep, you must ignore noise and other products of insufficient recording technic. If you care to learn to do all of this, I dare say there will come a day when some such record will make you feel like standing up and cheering.

HISTORICAL RECORD RELEASES

The International Record Collectors' Club has issued the following recordings in the past two months:

MEYERBEER: *Robert le Diable—A l'honnête homme!* and *Le bonheur est dans l'inconstance*; sung by Edmond Clement and Marcel Journet. (Recorded January 12, 1912). I.R.C.C. No. 138, 12-inch, price \$2.25.

A record distinguished for fine singing, disclosing both singers at their best.

SCHUMANN: *Der Nussbaum*; and STRAUSS: *Staendchen*; sung by Marcella Sembrich. (Recorded 1905). I.R.C.C. No. 139, 10-inch, price \$1.75.

The first recorded lieder of an outstanding singer!

MEYERBEER: *Huguenots — Romanza* (In German); sung by Andreas Dippel, and WEBER: *Freischuetz: Durch die Waelder*; sung by Alois Burgstaller. Re-recorded from Edison Cylinders Nos. B15 and B31. I.R.C.C. No. 136, 10-inch, price \$1.75.

WAGNER: *Rienzi—Gerechter Gott*; sung by Edyth Walker. Re-recorded from Gramophone records No. 043144-5. I.R.C.C. No. 137, 12-inch, price \$2.50.

SMETANA: *Arie der Marie* from *Verkaufte Braut*; and MOZART: *Heilige quelle* from *Figaros Hochzeit*; sung by Emmy Destinn. Repressed from Odeon records 50026 and 50153. 10³/₄-inch disc, price \$2.25.

The following records have been issued by the Chicago Historic Society:

WAGNER: *Im Treibhaus*; sung by Joanna Gadski, and GLUCK: *Orfeo—Su e con me*; sung by Gadski and Louise Homer. H.R.S. No. 1047, 12-inch, price \$2.25.

WAGNER: *Die Walkuere—Du bist die Lenz*, and *Bruenhilde's Battle Cry*; sung by Olive Fremstad. H.R.S. No. 1051, 10-inch, \$2.00.

The latter was re-recorded from Columbia record A1451.

—J. M. M.

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A Collector's Radio Program

Mr. Stephen Fassett, son of the well-known actor Jay Fassett, has arranged a series of interesting record programs to be heard on Thursday nights over New York's WQXR from 8 to 8:30 p.m. These programs, known as the *Great Singer Series*, will feature the recordings of singers both past and present. The series begins on February 2, with the recordings of Mme. Emma Eames, who will appear in person to comment on her career and records. On February 9, the recordings of Edmond Clement will be featured with Mr. Jay Fassett as commentator. On February 16, the recordings of Emmy Destinn will be heard and on February 23, the recordings of Francesco Tamagno will be featured.

A Gramophone Conference in England

William W. Johnson*

■ THE FIRST CONFERENCE OF GRAMOPHONE ENTHUSIASTS was held at Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire, during the week-end, November 4th to 7th, 1938. It attracted about 150 people — not all at once, for the average attendance was about 80 — but over 50 people resided at the conference estate, while others came in from London and elsewhere daily. Manufacturers of records and instruments, members of the buying public, both musical and technical, representatives of the many gramophone societies, and a number of gramophone dealers — all gathered together to exchange views and experiences and discuss mutual problems.

The program was a very full one. It consisted of lectures and debates, demonstrations and exhibitions of instruments, group discussions, and social functions, which kept the visitors busily employed from Friday afternoon until Monday morning. The weather was so favorable that group discussions were held in bright sunshine, while during a short spell for recreation on Saturday afternoon, miniature golf and other games were possible in the spacious grounds of the conference estate.

Compton Mackenzie took the Chair on Friday evening. He stressed the recreative as distinct from the educative properties of the gramophone, and said that had a European war broken out and wireless had been taken over by the government, the gramophone would have been the only source of music and entertainment for hundreds of thousands of the population. He recalled the early days of his journal, *The Gramophone*, when reproduced music was of such poor quality that musical people could not tolerate it. An exception was Sir Edward Elgar, whose faith in the gramophone was not only phenomenal, but who gave the lead by conducting performances of his own works in the recording studios.

F. W. Gaisberg, who worked with Emile Berliner in America during the latter years of the nineteenth century, then gave a short history of the gramophone which for interest and sparkling humor could not be excelled. In spite of a constant lack of dollars, Berliner persisted with his new invention, and in the end won through. But the struggle was long, over a quarter of a century passed before the new industry paid its way. Mr. Gaisberg still works strenuously for the parent company—Electric and Musical Industries, Ltd.

Walter Yeomans, of the Decca Record Company, Ltd., took up the thread where Mr. Gaisberg left off. He related some amusing anecdotes about his

*Mr. Johnson, Founder and Chairman of the National Federation of Gramophone Societies, and a well-known lecturer and author on matters musical and gramophonic, was in charge of the arrangements for this Conference.

association with the gramophone during the last twenty years. Like Compton Mackenzie, he emphasized the relaxation recorded music could give at the end of a busy day in a humdrum world.

On Saturday morning the discussion was based upon the "gramophile's journal", which is of such great value to the keen record enthusiast. Alex Robertson led the debate, and gave what in his opinion is the ideal form for a record review. Articles on matters gramophonic are rare, since there are few writers capable of giving interesting material that is reliable from the musical and the recorded standpoint. Scott Goddard was a just and business-like chairman at this session.

In the afternoon followed the Technical Session, which attracted well over a hundred people*.

Probably the most interesting discussion during the week-end was held on Saturday evening, when Sir Adrian Boult took the Chair. Dr. Percy Scholes had hoped to be present, but he was unfortunately called back to Switzerland, and his paper was read by Hubert Foss, Musical Editor of the Oxford University Press. Dr. Scholes pleaded for longer-playing records. He recalled how, many years ago, he heard the whole of the *Unfinished Symphony* on one record. Why are we still compelled to tolerate records that play only five minutes a side? In the general debate it appeared that five minutes is a desirable limit of continuous fixed attention, and that it is also the limit of endurance of a full symphony orchestra performing under the exacting conditions of a recording studio.

The manufacturers offered no hope of a gramophone of the type Dr. Scholes heard years ago. This consisted essentially of a turntable which revolved very slowly while the needle travelled in the outer grooves of the disc, and uniformly quicker as the needle approached the centre. Its advantages, however, did not warrant the scrapping of hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of plant in the existing factories.

The debate thereupon turned on the most satisfactory way of concluding the regular breaks in a long work. The method of fading out at the end of one record and fading in at the beginning of the next (with a small section of overlap) did not meet with approval. When it was suggested that a suitable ending could be made at an obvious musical climax, the recording companies pointed out that, however desirable, this was not to be recommended, because near the centre of the record the music tends to become "muzzy", and the effect would be even greater at a heavily-recorded passage. Sir Adrian Boult said that one method is to end on an unresolved chord: here again, several members of the audience disapproved. Finally it was stated that the subject is being closely followed by the manufacturers, and that the opinion of distinguished musicians is not ignored when a long work is being cut up into "snippets" for recording purposes.

The discussion continued, and members began to make inquiries as to the possibilities of a sound-on-film gramophone displacing the present universal disc system. Technical experts seemed to think that for a long time to come the cost would be prohibitive; that the quality of reproduction on such gramophones is in a primitive stage; and that wax is still the ideal medium for the sound track.

*A special and complete report on the deliberations, written by the technical expert, Donald W. Aldous, will be published in an early issue of *The American Music Lover*. Mr. Aldous was present and took an active part in the proceedings.

On Sunday morning, under the chairmanship of Sir Victor Schuster, Peter Latham gave an address on "The Gramophile and his Problems". One difficult question every enthusiast has to decide is what are the best new records to buy. Since one of the main virtues of the gramophone is its power of frequent repetition, records should be purchased only when the works they contain bear repeating. The speaker was not at all sure if any work would stand an exhaustive test of this nature. However, he did know that displays of mere virtuosity tended to pall the quickest, and that music of a sincere, earnest, personal character outlived pure exhibitionism. Since the gramophone was an ideal medium for bringing the unknown into the realms of familiarity, Peter Latham asked why all contemporary music of acknowledged merit was not immediately recorded.

This question caused a perceptible stir in the audience. Everybody wished to speak at once! As Conference Director I explained that the gramophone societies were always asking the same question. They could not understand why familiar classics were recorded and re-recorded over and over again, while much needed works were overlooked. This duplication had caused the gramophone clubs to present to the companies a list of thirty works that had either never been done, or were done so long ago that the recordings were useless compared with modern standards. The National Federation now asked what notice had been taken of this list.

In reply, Walter Legge, of "His Master's Voice", said that it was all very well for societies all over the country to dictate to the manufacturers, but as soon as the latter became philanthropic institutions the recording business would cease. Every new recording issued was calculated to pay its way, otherwise it would not have been done. Familiar classics, although issued over and over again, were in constant demand; and from a business point of view this duplication was absolutely warranted. Unfamiliar music, and especially modern works, were put out at great financial risk, and grave losses are not infrequent. Many keen gramophiles welcome the addition of a new work to the catalogue merely for the sake of seeing it there: they never think of purchasing it! The demand for modern works is not great enough to enable them to pay their way. The recent system of Society Albums has partially solved the difficulty, although many suggestions have come to naught because the requisite number of guarantors was not forthcoming.

On Sunday evening plans for a National Library of Recorded Music were discussed. The project did not receive the support that was expected, although the Federation was asked to continue its efforts to bring about the establishment of a national collection. Many of the difficulties of administering such a library were mentioned; and because nobody was able to suggest immediate solutions, there was some hesitation in the minds of the audience as to whether a national record library was a workable idea.

Afterwards a Record Club scheme was brought forward. The idea was to find in advance a large number of subscribers to a much-needed work, and to have this work recorded and issued at reduced rates. The differences between a Book Club and a Record Club were clearly defined, and it was agreed that the two have little in common. The great

obstacle was to know just which works would draw large numbers of subscribers, since all the popular classics are available in many forms. On this question the interesting debate broke down, there being no time to pursue the subject further. Yet it was felt that the matter should receive further attention at another conference.

The week-end concluded with an interesting record recital presented by Richard Haigh, General Manager of "His Master's Voice", on an expensive "de luxe" radiogram.

Many questions were touched on in the various debates and not brought to a logical conclusion owing to lack of time. There was a strong plea for a combined record catalogue to be issued by the various companies. The grounds for the plea were mere convenience. Representatives of the companies concerned offered little hope of such a catalogue. Another suggestion, also strongly supported, was that the titles of new issues should be announced in advance by the manufacturers. No reply was given to this request. One of the most intriguing questions was asked by a representative of one of the companies. He was most anxious to know why record sales of the better types of music have mounted up and up during the past two years. Nobody in the audience volunteered to solve the problem.

For a number of reasons, the proposed group discussions did not achieve the success that was intended. It was hoped that enthusiasts on such subjects as opera, swing music, record collecting, technical problems, gramophone societies, and so on, would meet together at opportune times and hold debates of their own. But the week-end was already so full, that opportune moments were few, and there were only two additional meetings that are worthy of noting. One was an open-air discussion on opera that attracted an unusually large audience, and that was brought to an untimely conclusion by Alec Robertson's lecture. And the other was a spontaneous sitting on the subject of "Tripe"! It so happened that in his interesting address, Alec Robertson referred to some forms of dance music as tripe. This caused one member present to ask for a definition of musical tripe, but the Chairman disallowed the question, and indicated that it might be discussed at a later session. When the questioner again brought the subject forward, he was put off a second time—amid protests! This led Walter Yeomans to offer (very gallantly) to hold a special meeting to discuss the subject. Without question, this meeting was one of the most lively, amusing, and enlightening events of the Conference. Speakers who had hitherto practised reserve put their views frankly and bluntly, with the result that musical highbrows and musical snobbery were subjected to severe criticism. Whether the original questioner received his much-needed definition or not is unknown, but he thanked both Mr. Yeomans and an interested audience for their sympathy and co-operation.

Among the social arrangements were two dances, two displays of fireworks on Guy Fawkes' Night, and a Conference Chorus (which made recordings of its songs) and a Glee Party. There were many demonstrations of radio-gramophones and other new instruments and a Conference Bookstall. Indeed all visitors came away from High Leigh with vivid memories of a unique week-end, which everyone agreed should be repeated on a future occasion. Without doubt, another gathering will be arranged some time during 1939.

RECORD NOTES AND REVIEWS

ORCHESTRA

BEETHOVEN: *Coriolan Overture*, Op. 62; played by London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction of Bruno Walter. Victor disc No. 12535, price \$1.50.

■ Here is a clean, straightforward performance of Beethoven's great *Coriolanus Overture*, with Walter conducting authoritatively and re-creating faithfully all the power and tenderness of the work. This disc supersedes previous recordings of the composition: it is superior mechanically to the perhaps more dramatic Mengelberg version and it is a finer reading than the Boult version, which is two or three years old. N. B.

BRAHMS: *Symphony No. 3 in F major*, Op. 90; played by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction of Felix Weingartner. Columbia set 353, four discs, price \$6.00.

■ There is a warm glow to this performance; one feels that the hand of a friend of long standing is guiding its destiny. What a fine thought it is that this can be repeated again and again, in other words that this performance is a recording rather than an actual one conveyed over the air only to be lost with the fading out of its final bars.

Both on the lecture platform and in critical copy I have often pointed out that the best Brahms symphony is to me the one I am hearing at the moment. Hence the best of his symphonies at this moment is the *Third*. Hadow goes further: he says that this symphony "is perhaps the finest, certainly the clearest, of all Brahms' instrumental compositions for orchestra—forcible and vigorous in movement, delightful in melody, and, of course, faultless in construction." Brahms wrote some of his most elaborate polyphony in this symphony, and yet it is "one of the least formal of compositions." In line with that thought is the remark of one of the audience after its first performance in Vienna—"Now at last I can understand Brahms at a first hearing."

It is generally conceded that Kalbeck's supposition that the second and third movements of this work were originally intended by

Brahms as music to Goethe's *Faust* is true. The production for which Brahms was writing music was abandoned, hence the composer's plan of supplying a *Faust* score had to be abandoned. It is generally considered that the Faustian sketches also contained the original material for the *Tragic Overture*.

I like the firmness of the opening of the first movement under Weingartner and the flexibility of line. The movement is marked *allegro con brio* and there is a distinct bite to the music. At the beginning I thought Weingartner could have realized a little more of the bite and taken the *con brio* marking more to heart. But subsequently, when the recapitulation began (shortly after the opening of side two), I marked Weingartner's tempi as just right. Clarity of line is essential and too much acceleration of tempo can create diffusion. One can be critically hasty, forgetful of such a thing as a recapitulation, but not so the knowing conductor who must see the thing not as of the moment alone but as a whole.

Brahms has provided an orchestra with opportunities for some lovely woodwind playing in the Andante. Weingartner keeps this lovely music steady; there are none of the distortions that mar Mengelberg's highly "individualized" reading. The steady flow brings out the rich blending in the instrumental choirs. Weingartner treats this movement less sentimentally than Walter, yet I would not say that the latter's reading was out of order. Again it's a matter of what you prefer, and when you consider your own predilections do not forget that that which is the most enduring is the most desirable in the long run.

The *Poco allegretto* has a charm all its own. One can overemphasize the broken rhythm here, make unnecessary retards and emphases that destroy the whimsical and nostalgic qualities of this music. Weingartner makes us fully conscious of the rich instrumentation and the moment's elevation. Stokowski overstressed the former to the detriment of the latter.

Walter's finale was more portentous; he felt the implication of the drama here. Weingartner again keeps the music flexible but retains a firm hand. Joachim, Brahms' great friend and admirer, found this last movement

"deep and original in conception," the most forcible of the four.

The basic soundness of Weingartner's reading is inevitably his right to fame. Despite the simplicity of his approach, one is always aware of the man's authority and certain that nothing is ever done that has not been carefully and conscientiously thought out before. There are two good readings of this symphony now available, Bruno Walter's and this one. The choice will largely be a personal one depending on whether the listener likes his Brahms dramatized more or less. My own choice would be less, and hence with Weingartner, but this does not say I will not enjoy Walter also.

The recording here is on the realistic side; the strings are reproduced with a fine concert-hall glow and the blending of the instrumental choirs has been excellently accomplished.

P. H. R.

..

COATES: *London Suite*; played by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, under the direction of the composer. Columbia disc, No. 69399-D, price \$1.50.

■ Several months ago Columbia sent us Eric Coates' suite, *London Again*. The public must have appreciated the thought, for now, crab-wise, the same company releases the original *London* suite. Again the composer conducts, and again the orchestra is the London Philharmonic.

There are three movements — a tarantelle called *Covent Garden*, which plays around the tune of the old song *Cherry Ripe*, a lush and rather folksy *Westminster* meditation, and a march, *Knightsbridge*. No one would claim for Coates that there is anything great or subtle about his music, but neither can one deny his supremacy in his own particular field. Nobody writes this type of light and unpretentious music quite so dashing as he. As a conductor, too, he knows what he wants, and the London Philharmonic plays for him with only a shade less brilliance than the Boston "Pops" Orchestra for Mr. Fiedler. The same is true of the recording engineers.

—P. M.

..

BIZET: *Jeux d'enfants—Ballet Suite, Op. 22*; played by London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction Antal Dorati. Victor set M-510, two discs, price \$3.50.

ERLANGER: *The Hundred Kisses—Ballet*; played by London Philharmonic Orchestra,

direction Antal Dorati. Victor set M-511, two discs, price \$3.50.

SCARLATTI-TOMMASINI: *The Good Humored Ladies—Ballet*; played by London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction Eugene Goossens. Victor set M-512, two discs, price \$3.50.

SCHUMANN: *Carnaval—Ballet Suite*; played by London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction Eugene Goossens. Victor set M-513, four discs, price \$6.50.

■ Bizet wrote the music for his *Jeux d'enfants* originally for piano duet, but later orchestrated five of its twelve numbers. Regarded as his best piano music, this little score also lends itself well to orchestral treatment. The ballet, devised by Massine, was first produced in 1932; it makes use of ten of the twelve pieces, but who orchestrated the other five we are not told. As in the music for *L'Arlésienne*, Bizet here proves himself a gifted miniaturist, for this music is charmingly written and expresses the nostalgia of a child's own world. The pieces used are: *The Swing (Reverie)*, *The Top (Impromptu)*, *The Doll (Berceuse)*, *The Hobby Horses (Scherzo)*, *The Shuttledore (Fantaisie)*, *Trumpet and Drum (March)* (disc 12373); and *Blindman's Buff (Nocturne)*, *Hide and Seek (Sketch)*, *The Little Husband, Little Wife (Duet)*, and *The Ball (Galop)* (disc 12374).

To those who may want only one of the records, we should recommend 12373 with the wholly delightful *Berceuse* and the ingenious *Scherzo* and *March*.

Dorati plays the music evidently with the dancers in mind. He is not one for great precision or polish, but with the help of a good orchestra he makes the music enjoyable. Surfaces are relatively quiet.

The composer of *The Hundred Kisses* is French by birth and English by adoption. He is Frédéric d'Erlanger (not to be confused with the composer of the French opera *Aphrodite*), a musician of no mean attainments, as this score proves. The music here is richly melodic, emotionally fervent, and wholly spontaneous. It fits its subject, which is the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale *The Princess and the Swineherd*. The dances were devised, it is interesting to know, by Nijinsky's sister Bronislava Nijinska. Dorati does well enough by the score, although one suspects that more could be made out of the *Grande Valse* (side 3) than he makes of it. The recording here is good and the surfaces on the quiet side.

The Italian composer Vincenzo Tommasini has made a truly delightful score from music of Domenico Scarlatti, a score appropriately linked to a story based on an 18th-century comedy by Goldoni. This is music that never grows stale, carefree music that offers practically no problems to the listener, irresistibly sparkling and refreshingly sportive. Goosens is just the man for this music, and he does notable justice to it. Those who are familiar with Scarlatti's clavier pieces will no doubt recognize some of them here, for example his *B minor Sonata*, L. 33 (side 2), his *Cat's Fugue*, L. 499 (side 3). The recording here is over two years old, but it compares favorably with some recent ones. Surfaces are not the quietest.

Schumann's *Carnaval* may lose something in the orchestral dress but despite this fact it has become highly popular with the general public. As a matter of fact its pieces fare better than do the Chopin pieces that make up the score of *Les Sylphides*. Goosens does a most convincing job, giving us a vivacious performance marked by the requisite precision. The recording here is good and the surfaces are smooth.

DELIBES: *Coppélia - Ballet and Suite - Dance of the Automatons and Waltz, and Czardas*; played by the Boston "Pops" Orchestra, direction Arthur Fiedler. Victor disc 12527, price \$1.50.

■ Fiedler gives us brilliant expositions of these familiar Delibes excerpts. His playing is more virtuoso than that usually associated with ballet performances. Particularly electrifying is his sharply-etched rendition of the *Dance of the Automatons*, and his forcefully outlined *Czardas*. Add brilliant recording to all this, and you have about the best reproduced selections to date of this Delibes music.

DELIBES: *Coppelia—Excerpts*; played by the Orchestra Symphonique de Paris, direction of F. Ruhlmann. Columbia discs 17128-29D, 10-inch, price \$1.00.

■ There is something of the quality of a pleasantly smooth radio broadcast in these records; the tone is sweet, not over-amplified, the playing is fluent, but the acoustic qualities of the recording are obviously those of a sound-deadened studio. Ruhlmann, a leading conductor of the Paris Opéra, gives a deft, well-rounded performance of the chosen excerpts from one of the most familiar and popular of ballets.

Disc 17128D contains *Prelude* and *Mazurka*, and *Andante* and *Valse*, while disc 17129D contains *Scene* and *Valse de la poupée*, and *Ballade*.

—P. G.

HANDEL: *Berenice—Minuet*; and PURCELL: *Three Dances from The Fairy Queen*; played by the Jacques String Orchestra conducted by Reginald Jacques. Columbia disc 69407D, price \$1.50.

■ The string orchestra and its music have not been too widely exploited on records. The English have done more of this type of recording than we have, and although many of their products have reached us, the most extensive series—those made by Boyd Neel, are unfortunately available in repressings that do scant justice to the originals. There was the possibility of a series of recordings by the N.B.C. String Symphony, but the two sets made suffered from flat recording tone; this however, was not Victor's fault but instead the fault of N.B.C.—which required the recording to be made in one of its dead studios. Some enterprising recording company should take hold of Alfred Wallenstein and his Simfonietta (Mutual Broadcasting System), for his is one of the finest chamber orchestras extant, and the set-up is one of the best on the air ways.

Jacques, a fairly recent newcomer to records, has achieved in a few short years of musical work in London, we are told, a high rating for his Bachian and other similar musical activities. Certainly from the evidence of this record, we would say that he has not only an understanding of the early orchestral music (17th-century in this case) but a sound appreciation of it. The Handel minuet is veritably heart-easing music, one of the composer's special melodic gems, and the dances from an opera by one of England's most famous composers have a freshness and charm all their own. The arrangement for string orchestra of the dances was made by Mr. Jacques. Both the recording and the surfaces here are satisfactory.

HAYDN: *Symphony in B flat major (B. and H. No. 102)*; played by Boston Symphony Orchestra, direction Serge Koussevitzky. Victor set M-529, three discs, price \$6.50.

■ A Haydn symphony is always welcome, particularly one never before recorded. This is the ninth of the so-called London Symphon-

ies, which Haydn wrote at the instigation of the 18th-century impresario, Salomon. It represents Haydn's genius in its maturity and like all symphonies of the composer's later years is fascinatingly fashioned. The symphony opens with the usual slow section, then comes the first movement proper—one of Haydn's most vibrant and zestful allegros, athletic in stride and gayly elated. The development section (beginning side two) is a particularly invigorating one; it will be enjoyed more and more as one becomes familiar with the themes that make up the first part of the movement (these themes are illustrated in the leaflet).

The slow movement is essentially lyrical with only an implication of intensity. Koussevitzky stresses its drama to the detriment of its cantilena. One recalls how Beecham handled a similar movement in his recording of the *D major Symphony* (B. & H. No. 93). The Englishman's orchestral nuances were all to the good. Here the effect is too massive, and the poetic mood is considerably weakened. One can admire, however, the conductor's deft handling of the rhythm.

The menuetto opens with a suggestion of a wooden-shoe dance. There is broad humor here. The melody of the trio (beginning side five) has an interesting chromatic construction. Returning to the buoyancy of the opening movement, the finale is a fleet-footed, scintillating piece of work—opening with a theme, as Tovey has said, kittenish in type but developing to the muscularity of a young tiger. Koussevitzky does notable justice to this movement.

In comparison with the reproduction of the *D major Symphony* referred to above (see September issue for review) the recording here suffers considerably. Dating back over two years and possessing none of the superb tonal qualities of the Boston Symphony recordings issued during the past year, it fails at this time to do justice to the performers. The string tone is coarse and lacking in essential roundness, and in several places the brasses obscure the melodic figuration. The surfaces have a fairly high level of needle-tracking sound, which is, however, generally consistent.

SCHUBERT: *Rosamunde-Ballet Music No. 1 in B minor*, and *No. 2 in G major*, Op. 26; played by London Symphony Orchestra, direction Bruno Walter. Victor disc 12534, price \$1.50.

■ Only a couple of months ago (see November issue) Columbia offered an album con-

taining the incidental music that Schubert wrote to an unsuccessful dramatic work called *Rosamunde, Princess of Cyprus*. After two performances the venture was abandoned and Schubert's score was bound into a parcel (this was in 1823) that was forgotten until over forty years after his death (1867). The story of how the music was found by two English musicians, Arthur Sullivan and George Grove, is almost as romantic as the story of the discovery of the *Unfinished Symphony*. How many people today, hearing this popular and beloved music, stop to think that it may easily have been lost to the world?

Perhaps the most popular excerpts from the incidental music to *Rosamunde* are these two ballets. The first, divided into two sections—an *allegro moderato* and an *andante un poco assai*,—begins in the key of B minor, not G major as the label states, and similarly the second—an *andantino*—is in G major not B minor. Such careless labelling should not take place.

By not observing repeats Walter gets all the music to both ballet sections on one disc. His playing of these excerpts is marked by admirable purity. Naturally this disc replaces any other recording since the recording ranks among the best of modern times.

P. H. R.

MANNA-ZUCCA: *Rachem (Mercy)*; and *Eili, Eili*; played by Boston "Pops" Orchestra, direction of Arthur Fiedler. Victor disc No. 12536, price \$1.50.

■ *Rachem*, by Manna-Zucca (née Augusta Zuckerman), is its composer's Opus 60, No. 1—a song with Jewish text, except for the invocation, which is in Hebrew. The general sense of the words is summed up in the opening phrase: "Have mercy on us, O Lord". An attractive devotional song, it is played here in a resplendent arrangement for orchestra, with trumpet solo by Roger Voisin. This artist also plays the vocal part of the familiar traditional song, *Eili, Eili*, the melody of which here differs somewhat from that usually heard. The present orchestration is based on a version of the tune published by Shalitt and issued many years ago by the Jewish Folk-song Society of Petrograd. The arrangements used here were made by Agide Jacchia.

Some may prefer songs of this type in a less pretentious setting, but it cannot be denied that the instrumentation is extremely effective. Performance and recording are first-rate.

N. B.

OFFENBACH: *Gaité Parisienne*; played by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction Efrem Kurtz. Columbia set X115, two discs, price \$3.25.

■ A perfect gloom-chaser, said one English review of this music. It certainly is all of that, an irresistible and rousing score, full of exuberance and verve. Ernest Newman says the Moulin Rouge in its time never offered anything as good as this ballet, which is unquestionably one of the most popular of the Monte Carlo offerings. Whether or not the naughty Can Can dancers at the end account for the furor over this ballet we'll leave to the imagination of our readers.

The music is of the variety type, zestful and full of pep. Your feet want to go with it from the opening note of the brilliant overture, which is followed by an equally intriguing Torton. Side two opens with a delightfully humorous Galop, and then comes a conventional waltz and a march. Side three has a Grand Waltz, a Quadrille and the Can Can music. The last-named dance is frankly and avowedly sensational, and this the music conveys. The rapidity of the dancing and the difficulty of perfect timing is another thing that makes it all the more thrilling. Inevitably it brings the house down.

As a recording this one is most realistic. Kurtz, the Ballet Russe's chief conductor, does an outstanding job, maintaining a precision that is too often missing in ballet performances.

The music is made up of various pieces chosen from Offenbach's works, orchestrated here by Manuel Rosenthal. The first waltz is based on a tune from *Orpheus in the Underworld*.

P. G.

SAINT-SAËNS: *Marche héroïque*, Op. 34; played by the Orchestra Symphonique of Paris, conducted by F. Ruhlmann. Columbia disc, No. P-69408-D, price \$1.50.

■ Saint-Saëns' *Marche héroïque* dates from 1871; its musical material was originally conceived as a war-time cantata with a text by the composer himself. In that form, however, he was unable to get it performed. He put it aside for a time, then remade it as the march we know today. The first performance was at a benefit concert, when Saint-Saëns and Lavignac played it as a piano duet.

Like everything which Saint-Saëns produced, the *Marche héroïque* is well made, and of course the scoring for orchestra is effective.

Again, like a great deal of this composer's output, it is music of no tremendous distinction. It might have been conceived by most any composer of its time—though it may be doubted if many composers could have turned it as well. It is given a good healthy performance by M. Ruhlmann and his orchestra, and the disc reproduces well if we accept that static quality characteristic of the studio recordings of several years ago. The surfaces are good.

P. M.

WAGNER: *Tannhäuser—Overture and Venusberg Music* (discs 15310-2) and *Prelude to Act 3* (discs 15313-4S); played by the Philadelphia Orchestra, direction Leopold Stokowski. Victor set M-530, nine sides, price \$9.00.

■ Just ten years ago Stokowski recorded the *Tannhäuser Overture and Venusberg Music* (Paris Version), unquestionably one of his most successful Wagnerian contributions to the phonograph. Here we have a recently re-recorded version with Stokowski's own arrangement of that tone-poem which Wagner wrote as the prelude to the third act, subtitled it *Tannhäuser's Pilgrimage*.

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Toccata in C Minor and Toccata in D Major (Bach) Played by Artur Schnabel, piano. Album M-532 (AM-532 for automatic operation) 8 sides, \$6.50.

Black Eyes, sung by Feodor Chaliapin with the Aristoff Choir and Balalaika Orchestra.

The Prisoner (Rubinstein) sung by Feodor Chaliapin with piano accompaniment. Record No. 15236, \$2.00.

Don Giovanni—Il mio tesoro (To My Beloved) (Mozart).

L'Elisir D'Amore—Una furtiva lagrima (A Furtive Tear) (Donizetti) sung by Richard Crooks with orchestra conducted by Wilfred Pelletier. Record No. 15235, \$2.00.

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Rachem (Mercy) (Manna-Zucca—Arranged by Agide Jacchia).

Eili, Eili—(Arranged by Agide Jacchia from notation by Shalitt) played by the Boston "Pops" Orchestra, Arthur Fiedler, Conductor. Record No. 12536, \$1.50.

Coriolan Overture (Beethoven) Played by the London Symphony Orchestra, Bruno Walter, Conductor. Record No. 12535, \$1.50.

Rosamunde—Ballet Music No. 1 in G Major and No. 2 in B Minor (Schubert) Played by the London Symphony Orchestra, Bruno Walter, Conductor. Record No. 12534, \$1.50.

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Mazurka in B Major (Chopin) Played by Moriz Rosenthal, Piano. Record No. 1951, \$1.50.

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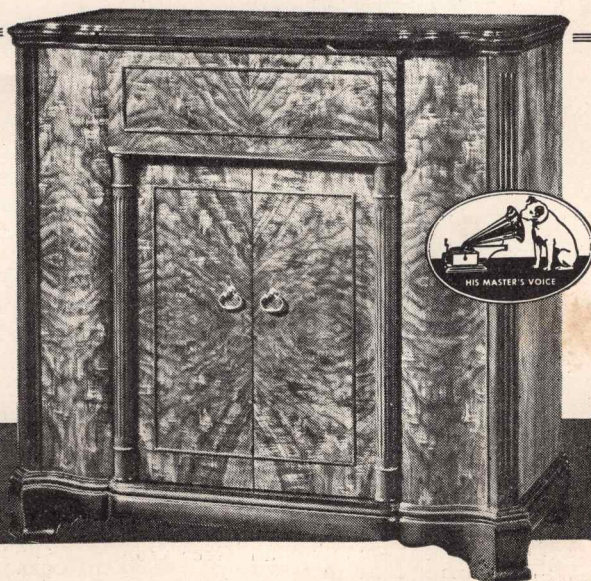
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Wagner wrote his Paris version of the Venusberg music fifteen years after the completion of *Tannhäuser*. The story of how this music was commissioned by Napoleon III. who regarded Wagner as a nobody, at the instigation of his friend the Princess Metternich, of how the young dandies who formed the Paris Jockey Club, antagonized by the ballet's appearance in the opera before their arrival in the opera house, hooted and whistled to spoil the presentation of the opera has been told too often for us to repeat it here. Furthermore the notes to the set furnish this data.

What Wagner had learned in composing *Tristan and Isolde* stood him in good stead in his revision of the Venusberg music. For the Paris performance of his opera *Tannhäuser* he not only shortened the original overture, omitting the last 156 bars, but ran the part he retained into the revised *Bacchanale*. For the latter part of the music he evolved three new themes, which have been called "inventions of striking beauty and eloquence, conceived in the ripened style of *Tristan*" (Gilman). Whether heard in the opera house, in the concert hall or from records this music is always emotionally stirring.

Stokowski does notable justice to this music on the whole, but one wishes he had stressed its sentiment less in those glowing final pages. The inclusion of the voices in the latter part of the Venusberg music is a decided improvement over the older recording.

The introduction to the third act of *Tannhäuser* is intended to relate in music his pilgrimage to Rome. It is, as we have said above, a tone poem. Opening with the song of the older pilgrims from the first act, the music proceeds with Elisabeth's Intercession theme; next we hear a theme depicting Tannhäuser's suffering in the journey and then the Repentance motive. The restless string figurations from the overture which follow lead to a theme, given out by the brasses, which has been termed Heavenly Grace. A climax follows, then the same theme returns, then an oboe recalls the Intercession motive and a long cello passage ends the introduction. In the opera house the curtain rises immediately, showing Elisabeth praying before a wayside shrine in a valley. Stokowski gives this music a most expressive reading.

From the reproductive standpoint these records are tonally opulent and vibrantly alive. Because of this it is unfortunate that the surfaces are not smoother and free from intermittent clicking sounds.

WEBER: *Oberon—Overture*; played by London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction Sir Thomas Beecham. Columbia disc 6940D, price \$1.50.

■ Beecham achieves a rarely delicate and evocative opening for this familiar overture. The horn of Oberon observes the *dolce* marking in the score, and so do the muted strings that follow with their theme drawn, strangely enough, from the pageantry at the end of the opera. The horn again, and then the motives which characterize the Elves and the Knights. This comprises the introduction, then with the opening of the overture proper the theme is taken from the latter part of Rezia's *Ocean* aria. The repetition of the thematic material can easily be recognized.

As in the overtures to his other operas, Weber here draws entirely upon the themes that importantly outline his plots. Weber's overtures have been called tone poems, and it is this impression that Beecham sustains in his performances of them.

His phrasing is especially noteworthy, and the contrasting qualities of the music are deftly handled and expressed. The jubilation motive, drawn from Rezia's famous aria, can and frequently does become a tawdry thing in the recapitulation of the music, but not so under Beecham's fastidious guidance.

With excellent recording and good surfaces this performance becomes the best version of the *Oberon Overture* now available. Previously the best performance was Mengelberg's old recording.

P. H. R.

CONCERTO

HAYDN: *Concerto in D major for piano and orchestra, Op. 21*; played by Marguerite Roesgen-Champion and Orchestra Symphonique of Paris, direction M. F. Gailard. Columbia Set No. X-118, two discs, price \$3.25.

■ Of several clavier concertos composed by Haydn, the D major seems to be the only one that is still publicly performed now and then. It was written about 1782 and published two years later. Not among the finest of Haydn's compositions, it nevertheless has enough attractive qualities to warrant an occasional hearing. The work is scored for strings, oboes, and horns, and in form is similar, though on a smaller scale, to some of Mozart's clavier concertos of about the same time. Its instrumentation is less adventurous than that

of the younger master, but its thematic material is interesting and the workmanship, of course, is impeccable. I liked best the poetic slow movement and the rousing finale, a rondo in Hungarian style.

This concerto has been recorded by Landowska on the harpsichord. Perhaps to avoid duplication, Mme. Roesgen-Champion—who is well known as a harpsichordist—chose to play it on the piano. She gives a spirited, tasteful performance but is somewhat handicapped by what sounds like a weak, thin orchestra. Possibly ill-balanced recording is responsible for this impression. I have not heard the Landowska version, which has never been issued in this country.

N. B.

MENDELSSOHN: *Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64*; played by Yehudi Menuhin and the Orchestre des Concerts Colonne (Paris) conducted by Georges Enesco. Victor set M-531, seven sides, price \$7.00.

■ One of the functions of the phonograph companies should be to give us recordings of great works by more than one great performer. When we first saw this set listed we were inclined to say, "What, another Mendelssohn violin concerto recording!" After all, it was only a year ago that the Kreisler re-recording was listed. But the fact remains that such a work as this deserves to exist in more than one recording, for no matter how highly a given critic may regard Mr. Kreisler's or Mr. Szigeti's recording of it, there will always exist a group of listeners who may well prefer Mr. Menuhin's performance. Of the three performances none is wholly satisfactory, yet Kreisler with his sentient lyricism perhaps realizes the essence of the music's serenity and charm more truly than either of the other two performers, despite his lapses from pitch.

Mendelssohn at his best possesses both elegance and grace, but to play this music without some inner fire or sentiment is to do the composer an injustice. Both Menuhin and Szigeti avoid excessive sentiment, but the former plays with a polished suavity that is admirable only from a standpoint of musicianship. There is insufficient contrast in his interpretation here. Although the inner movement has breadth and dignity, it also has true poetic sentiment, and it should contrast strongly with the more classic first movement. Mendelssohn was not entirely a classicist, he had his romantic moments and they deserve to be exploited as such. Kreisler alone achieves

the desired effect here. Then there is the matter of the last movement, a virtuoso piece, which should be played with sparkle and dash. Szigeti gives it the proper impetus and polish, Menuhin treats it too coolly, and Kreisler gives it the lightest and, at the same time, the most scintillating treatment.

There is an extraordinary blend of musicianship in this recording, for Menuhin's famous teacher (himself a fine violinist) is at the orchestral helm. One cannot but admire the clarity of line that the conductor maintains and the recording engineer has preserved, but one may feel upon more than one occasion that Enesco conceives a greater climax than the soloist does. After the expansive spirit and enthusiasm of Menuhin's performance of the Schumann violin concerto, his performance here is, on the whole, a bit of a let-down. Yet, there are moments of inspired artistry, moments in which the young violinist's spirit seems to soar with his tones, as in the middle of the first movement and in the latter part of the second.

Curiously no musical director of a record company has sensed the value of preserving Mendelssohn's masterly intentions by having the first movement lead without pause into the second. Such an effect could so easily be obtained in a recording, for the frequent discourtesy of an interrupting audience is quite removed. "Few things in music," says the all-wise Tovey, "are more essentially ugly than a vague and meaningless introduction to a lyric melody." Out of the last chord of the first movement emerges the introduction to the second movement; it is, when played without interruption, a "remarkable stroke of genius", but when it is interrupted the effect that the composer so carefully planned is removed. "What Mendelssohn wrote and meant," says Tovey, "was one of his most romantic changes of key and mood."

Mechanically this set is entirely satisfactory.
P. H. R.

CHAMBER MUSIC

BACH: *Sonatas for Violin and Clavier—Vol. 2: No. 4 in C minor, No. 5 in F minor, and No. 6 in G major*; played by Boris Schwarz (violin) and Alice Ehlers (harpsichord). Gamut set No. 8, six discs, price \$9.50.

■ As the annotator of this set says, it should not require the opinions of authorities to convince the listener that these sonatas, like so many works of their period, are heard to

greater advantage when the harpsichord is used instead of the piano. Unless one is completely opposed to the tonal quality of the harpsichord one can easily substantiate the above statement by listening to the performance of either the fourth or the sixth sonata, as given here, and then as played by Dubois and Maas (Columbia records). Generally speaking, these sonatas are regarded as "trios", since the harpsichord is usually assigned two parts to the violin's one.* Hence the statement that "the proper performance of these works demands an ensemble that will project the three parts as a trinity—one homogeneous unit with three distinct parts." The tone of the harpsichord is usually considered to blend better than that of the piano with the violin.

Our review of Gamut's album No. 7, containing the first three sonatas, appeared in the December issue. At that time we spoke of the excellence of the performances and their remarkable balance. The present set considerably alters our earlier opinion of the merits of the violinist's part in the ensemble, for his tonal quality is not only more uniform and less strident in the upper regions here but fuller and richer. It may be that recording had something to do with this, and it may be that as the recording of the works progressed the violinist's self-command increased.

Next to the *E major* the *C minor Sonata* is undoubtedly the most popular of the six. In our estimation it is the most cherishable of the group, despite the fact that authorities claim that its austere second movement (allegro) overbalances the scheme of the work, which is cast in the church-sonata style—a slow movement followed by a quick one and repeat. The opening movement here is the most famous of all those that comprise the six sonatas, a largo sub-titled *Siciliana*. Its relationship to the famous siciliana aria (*Erbarne dich, mein Gott*) will be immediately noted; the same depth of pathos is sounded. It is greatly to the credit of the present performers that the intensity of this music and its poetic emotional fervor is so well sustained and not permitted to degenerate into sentimentality (the thing that ruined Stokowski's performance in his deft transcription for modern orchestra).

The *F minor Sonata* has a memorable opening movement, a richly expressive largo, which Mr. Schwarz plays with superb tonal intensity. Next comes the usual bright alle-

gro, and then the surprise movement of the entire six sonatas — a study in the expressive potentialities of changing harmonies. Throughout the movement the violinist has a two-voiced part, while the harpsichord accompanies in arpeggios. This is the famous movement that Schweitzer characterized as unpleasant when played in conjunction with the piano. It is followed by a syncopated vivace.

The *G major Sonata*, unlike its predecessors, has five instead of four movements—an opening allegro, a short largo, an allegro for the harpsichord alone (superbly played by Miss Ehlers), a rarely delicate cantabile adagio, and a final spirited allegro. The melodic writing of the adagio is of exceptional beauty and this movement has been called one of "the rarest in Bach's instrumental music."

The recording here, as in the previous album, is distinguished for its clarity of line and unusually fine balance, and the record surfaces are unusually quiet.

Undoubtedly the ardent Bachian will want both sets; but to those who cannot afford to buy both we recommend the purchase of the present album. It is an entirely satisfactory and truly extraordinary achievement in the efforts being made to present authentic interpretations of Bach on records today.

—P. H. R.

BRAHMS: *Sonata in F minor for Clarinet and Piano, Op. 120, No. 1*; played by David Weber (clarinet) and Ray Lev (piano). Musicraft Album No. 27, three discs, price \$5.

■ The two *Clarinet Sonatas* of Brahms are both available in splendid recordings in which the viola is employed instead of the clarinet: the *F minor Sonata* was done some years ago by Lionel Tertis and the *E flat Sonata* was recently recorded by William Primrose. It is well known that the composer indicated that these works could be performed by a viola; but it may not be so well known that he seems to have had misgivings about the use of the stringed instrument. He wrote to Joachim in 1894: "I hope that Mühlfeld will be able to come—for I fear that as viola sonatas both pieces are very inept and unsatisfactory." This sentence is followed by a paragraph that throws an interesting light on the whole problem of transcriptions in general. Brahms wrote: "This reminds me of the secret anger I felt when you once told me, quite simply and casually, that you have played my clarinet quintet as a violin sonata. Why does one take pains, then, to compose to a certain extent rationally?"

*Sometimes the lowest is supported by a cello, but this treatment seems to have been optional even in Bach's time.

With such artists as Tertis and Primrose playing the viola the sonatas are far from unsatisfactory to most of us. But it is good to have at least one of the sonatas played by the instrument the composer had in mind when he wrote it. The *F minor Sonata* is less lyric and more melancholy than its companion piece but it has a lovely waltz for a scherzo and an animated finale. Mr. Weber's tone is pleasant, if rather limited in variety of color, and Miss Lev gives a sound performance of the important piano part. Musicraft's surfaces here seem a little noisy after last month's Kirkpatrick release, but the reproduction is otherwise quite lifelike.

HARRIS: *Chorale for String Sextette* (Op. 3); played by the Kreiner Sextette. Victor disc No. 12537, price \$1.50.

■ This composition, originally the slow movement of a sextet for strings, was first performed alone in 1933, when it was played by the string section of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, under the direction of Arthur Rodzinski. In a foreward to the printed score, the composer writes: "The theme is taken from the melodic contours of early American Church tunes. The form is a variation development of that theme."

The harmonization is richly dissonant. Several hearings may be required before the listener learns to identify the principal melody and to follow it through its adventures. In our opinion the work is worth a little effort on the part of the hearer, for despite a prevailing thickness of texture and a lack of rhythmic variety (although there are plenty of changes of meter), it contains many eloquent and expressive passages. The *Chorale* is carefully performed by the Kreiner Sextet, which consists of the Kreiner Quartet plus Ely Lifshy, viola, and Carl Stern, cello.

SCHUBERT: *Sonata No. 1 in D major, Op. 137, No. 1*; played by Ossy Renardy, violin, and Walter Robert, piano. Columbia Set No. X116, two discs, price \$3.25.

■ This little sonata, composed in 1816, is probably Schubert's first attempt at writing for violin and piano in the larger forms. He had already written two vocal masterpieces—*Gretchen am Spinnrade* and *Erk König*—, but in that field he was breaking new ground. In the field of the sonata, however, there were great and revered models at hand—the works

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SCHUBERT: *Sonata No. 1 in D major, Op. 137, No. 1*; Ossy Renardy (violin) and Walter Robert (piano).

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of Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven. It is not surprising, therefore, that the present sonata betrays the influence of these masters, particularly the first-named. Schubert here is content to fill the conventional form, and the material he uses is simple, melodious, and of an innocent charm.

Renardy is a young European artist who is now visiting this country. He gives an admirable performance, not the least attractive feature of which is a warm, vibrant tone. The recording is good, except that the balance could have been improved in a few spots where the piano is too subdued. The fourth side contains the minuet and finale from Op. 137, No. 3.

—N. B.

VIOLIN

PIZZETTI: *No. 1 of Tre Canti ad una giovane fidanzata—Affettuoso*; and SZYMANOWSKI: *Tarantelle, Opus 28, No. 2*; played by Nathan Milstein and Leopold Mittmann. Columbia disc 69398-D. price \$1.50.

■ Both Pizzetti and Szymanowski reveal marked lyric gifts in these pieces. The Pizzetti composition is part of a suite which the composer calls *Three Songs for a Betrothed Young Girl*. With the Italian violinist, A. Poltronieri, Pizzetti has already recorded the entire suite (Italian Columbia discs D14556-57). The first movement of the suite, marked *affettuoso*, probably is intended to convey the emotional happiness of the prospective bride; the second movement, marked *Quasi grave e commosso*, probably is intended to convey harried thoughts, grave concern; and the last movement, *Appassionata*, undoubtedly conveys the complete elation of love.

Columbia's assertion that the Szymanowski piece is given its first domestic release here is incorrect; for on Victor disc 14383, issued a year ago, Menuhin plays not only the *Tarantelle* but its companion piece *Notturno*. Szymanowski's exploitation of an Italian dance form, the *Tarantella*, is a brilliant piece of technical craftsmanship.

Milstein gives polished and brilliant performances of both pieces, less inwardly fervent than Menuhin in the Szymanowski composition yet thoroughly admirable for the lucidity and technical assurance of the playing. The recording is good.

—P. G.

LIE-SZIGETI: *Norwegian Song—Snow (Sne)*; PROKOFIEFF-GRUNES: *Cavotte (from Classical Symphony, Op. 25)*; STRAVINSKY-DUSHKIN: *Danse Russe (from Petrouchka)*; played by Joseph Szigeti, violin, with piano accompaniment by Nikita de Magaloff. Ten-inch Columbia disc, No. 17130-D, price \$1.00.

■ Here is a little record of transcriptions which raises the usual question—was it necessary? Not much fault can be found with the playing or the smooth-surfaced recording, but as to the artistic value of the music as presented there is some room for doubt. The Sigurd Lie song is a favorite from the Scandinavian repertoire, though I question whether anyone could call it very important even in its original form. The transcription is a trick affair, starting out with the solo played in octaves by the piano, while the fiddle performs some curious gymnastics. Neither this trifle nor the Prokofieff *Cavotte* gains in smoothness by being transferred to the violin.

Columbia already had a recording of the *Petrouchka Dance*, so that the reverse side cannot even be said to fill a gap. No one will deny that the Szigeti performance is more brilliant than that of Dushkin (Columbia 17075-D) or that the recording is cleaner and fuller, but the older disc had the personal interest provided by the composer at the piano, and had also an attractive coupling in Stravinsky's *Pastorale*.

P. M.

KREISLER: *Liebesleid (Love's Sorrow)*, and *La Gitana (Arabian-Spanish Song)*; played by Fritz Kreisler and Franz Rupp. Victor disc 1950, 10-inch, price \$1.50.

■ In the old Viennese song, *Liebesleid*, there is a nostalgic quality, which Kreisler has enhanced in both his unerringly musical setting and his sentimentally warm performance. We can well imagine those who knew the Vienna of old becoming heartsick upon hearing him play this tune. *La Gitana* is less impressive. It is one of Kreisler's typical *salon* pieces—pleasant to hear but easy to forget. The playing here is the thing. Reproduction is good.

SARASATE: *Zigeunerweiser, Opus 20, No. 1*; played by Jascha Heifetz and the London Philharmonic Orchestra, direction John Barbirolli. Victor disc 15246, price \$2.00. ■ To our knowledge we have never had a domestic recording of Sarasate's popular

Gypsy Airs in which the violinist was accompanied by an orchestra, as the composer intended. It must be admitted that the languorous and nostalgic qualities of the music gain immeasurably with the added richness of an instrumental background. The piano hardly sustains the tonal subtleties of Sarasate's background.

Heifetz plays this music with extraordinary purity of style and with exquisite tone, and Barbirolli gives him a well-poised and appropriately modulated background. The recording is excellent.

—P. G.

Its claims to attention are the selections, both of which are worthy of attention (the only other recording of the Bach was done in Schönberg's orchestration). The Mendelssohn suffers from its isolation from the rest of the sonata, but it is a pleasingly melodious bit in itself. *Komm, Gott, Schöpfer, heiliger Geist* is one of the strongest and most imposing of the chorale preludes. Commette plays both pieces competently, though the organ is rather overweighted and there is some cathedral echo. The disc is in no way sensational, but it will do quite nicely until a better one is made. The surfaces are smooth.

P. M.

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BACH: *Komm, Gott, Schöpfer, heiliger Geist*; and MENDELSSOHN: *Sonata No. 6, in D minor, Op. 65; Andante*; played by Edouard Commette on the organ of the Lyons Cathedral. Ten-inch Columbia disc, No. 402-M, price 75c.

■ After the recent improvements in organ recording (due in part to the careful selection of the instruments recorded) this disc is a dip into the past. It was a very good recording in its day, but it hardly compares mechanically with the Musicraft discs of Weinrich or Columbia's own Schweitzer sets.

BACH: *Toccata in C minor* and *Toccata in D major*; played by Artur Schnabel. Victor Set M-532, four 10-inch discs, price \$6.50.

■ This writer has never been among the most enthusiastic admirers of Schnabel's art, but the present set is a powerful argument for the pianist, as least as far as the playing of Bach is concerned. The slow parts of these toccatas are played with such inwardness, such serenity and poetry, and the fast parts with such sparkle and rhythmic verve and effortless technic, that it is hard to see how these performances could be bettered. Everything is in perfect style—the fugues are played with the utmost clarity, liveliness and in-

telligence; and Schnabel rarely indulges in an effect that could not be duplicated on the harpsichord. No matter what one may think of Schnabel's Beethoven, Mozart, and Brahms, one must say that these discs represent a great artist. And represent him worthily, for the recording is very good indeed.

The *C minor Toccata* is one of the finest of Bach's clavier toccatas. It falls into three main divisions—a slow section, a three-part fugue, and another three-part fugue on the same subject. It has been recorded by Marcel Maas—an excellent performance which is, I think, overshadowed by the present one. The *D major Toccata*, called in some editions *Fantasia and Fuga*, has a delightful first section, a splendid adagio, and a sprightly fugue. It was recently recorded by Landowska in a magnificent reading on the harpsichord. Dyed-in-the-wool harpsichord fans, of course, would not dream of buying a piano version of Bach, but to those music lovers who are not so finicky the Schnabel set is wholeheartedly and unreservedly recommended.

N. B.

• •

CHOPIN: *Mazurka in B minor, Op. 63, No. 1; Mazurka in D major, Op. 33, No. 2*; played by Moriz Rosenthal, piano. Ten-inch Victor disc, No. 1951, price \$1.50.

■ This little record makes a charming addition to the growing Rosenthal list, and one which every admirer of this remarkable old man will want. The *Mazurkas* are both slight—in fact few works of art have ever been built on much less than the D major one—but they are fascinating, and turned by the great artist with just the proper touch. The recording is well up to standard—therefore there is hardly room for much controversy.

P. M.

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DEBUSSY: *Preludes-Book I* (with the exception of No. 10), and *Estampes, No. 3—Jardins sous la pluie*; played by Walter Gieseking. Columbia set 352, six 10-inch discs, price \$6.00.

■ It becomes increasingly evident with each new Debussy recording by Walter Gieseking that this artist has made the composer's style completely his own. His is a most sensitive touch for the nuanced delicacies of the Frenchman's pianistic aquatints. In the *Danseuses de Delphes* the pianist emphasizes its classical inspiration, in *Voiles* he achieves the most

delicate poetry in the pictorial fade-out of the end (disc 17122D). In *Le vent dans la plaine* the changing moods of the music are memorably exploited, and in the Baudelairian *Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir* the pastel hues of the composer's exploitation of chordal sonorities are rarely conveyed (disc 17123D). Debussy's sun-drenched picture of *Les collines d'Anacapri* suggests a jolly little donkey jogging along and the hurrying feet of the young girls and men on their way to work, while *Des pas sur la neige* is haunting, fragmentary music. Both are played by Gieseking with almost incomparable finish (disc 17124D). *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest* evokes a picture of a storm and shipwreck, the tolling bells and the rush of the relentless sea. Gieseking achieves but does not overstress the realism here. Next there is that delicate and charming *La Fille aux cheveux de lin*, essentially the song, which the pianist plays exquisitely, the delicate harmonies of the last part evoked with a veritably uncanny touch. (Disc 17125D). The sly humor of *La Sérénade interrompue* follows. It is No. 9 of the first twelve preludes. Since Gieseking previously recorded No. 10—*La Cathédrale engloutie* (disc 17077D), it is coupled with No. 11, the *Danse de Puck*. Here Puck is suggested more in the role of a Peeping Tom than of the prankster, flitting here and there, looking for mischief, and then vanishing quietly into space. (Disc 17126D). *Minstrels* is the last of the *First Book of Preludes*, a music-hall travesty. Gieseking curiously suggests less of the negro influence here than others do. On the reverse face is Debussy's wholly charming little étude, *Jardins sous la pluie*—rain over the garden falling swiftly and inevitably. (Disc 17127D).

Gieseking conveys all this music with extraordinary pianistic artistry. His tonal effects are evidently worked out to convey the utmost in nuance and color rather than big sonorities. The music is not, however, inappropriately subdued. The recording of piano tone here is quite remarkable, for it conveys some unusually delicate effects. For this reason it is unfortunate that the surface sound is at such a high level.

In the August, 1938 issue of the AML the writer had an article on the two books of preludes by Debussy and their recordings in which his comment that Gieseking "has given us the most cherishable recording of" *La Cathédrale engloutie* might well be altered to read "he has given us the most cherishable recordings of the entire twelve preludes"—

for such is the case. And now let us hope that Gieseking will give us a complete recording of the twelve preludes that make up *Book Two* (with all due apologies to Messrs. Cortot and Copeland).

P. H. R.

GUITAR

CIMAROSA: *Sonata in A major*; RAMEAU: *Gavotte*; played by Julio Martinez Oyanguren. Ten-inch Columbia disc, No. 17118-D, price \$1.00.

■ Mr. Oyanguren's latest record is notable primarily in that it introduces us to two old pieces of unusual charm. As music for the guitar they are less idiomatic than the music of this artist's previous releases. I do not know where to look in the works of Rameau for the original of this little *Gavotte*, but I feel reasonably sure that it was not conceived for the guitar. The Cimarosa is included in Philipp's edition of this composer's sonatas for piano. It is a delightful little work, showing strong traces of the Scarlatti influence. It runs more smoothly on the guitar than its companion, though one would have little trouble spotting it as a transcription.

Oyanguren plays well, of course, but he has been more persuasive in genuine guitar music. The recording maintains the high standard of his series. The record should be heard because the music is worth knowing, though its appeal might be killed by performances in the original mediums.

—P. M.

VOCAL

BORTNIANSKY: *Hymne des Chérubins*—No. 7; and *Tchesnokoff: Que ma prière monte*; sung by the Choir of the Russian Cathedral in Paris, under the direction of Nicolas Afonsky. Victor disc, No. 36223, price \$1.25.

■ The interest in the magnificent music of the Russian church has been growing for many years in this country, and such portions of the liturgy as the present ones appear quite frequently as anthems in American churches. It is good to hear them sung in the authentic language and manner, and the excellent series of recordings from the Russian Cathedral in Paris might be used as a model of the way in which this sort of thing should be done. Aside from such considerations, the music, in itself, is lovely, massive in quality and eloquent in its simplicity.



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There is a prominent alto solo in *Que ma prière monte* (the French titles have been rather unnecessarily carried over from the imported labels) sung by Mme. G. Pavlenko, whose voice will be remembered by those who know the Choir's recording of the Gretchaninoff *Credo* (Victor 36040). She is equally effective here. The vocal quality throughout the choir is thoroughly Russian, and an occasional slight imperfection in intonation is more than compensated for by the fervor and sincerity of the singing. The recording is first-rate.

BRAHMS: *Fourteen Songs*, sung by Alexander Kipnis, basso, with Gerald Moore at the piano. Victor set M-522, price \$12.00.

■ This set, the first and so far the only volume of the Brahms Song Society, was released in England a couple of years ago, and shortly thereafter repressed in this country in a very special limited edition. The accompanying booklet forestalled the inevitable criticism of the selection of songs by stating that the aim of the first volume was to present the greatest and most representative Brahms rather than to fill gaps in the recorded repertoire. The choice of Alexander Kipnis as the artist to initiate the series makes the set possibly a more personal affair than it should rightly be, for the Kipnis style of lieder singing is a distinctly personal one. Possessed of a glorious and superbly controlled voice (likened by no less an authority than W. J. Henderson to that of Edouard de Reszke) and a true sense of musical and poetic values, he lacks only a transfiguring imagination to make his song singing really great. His tone is rich and warm: his temperament is less so. Although he sings always with taste and intelligence, he rarely quite forgets the technique of the opera house. Occasionally his phrasing suffers from this — especially in Brahms, who had little mercy on the singer's breath control. And for a vocalist whose career has been made mostly in German music he does surprising things with the language.

All these flaws would seem less important in less familiar songs. As it is we can forgive most of them for the sheer beauty of the voice. Collectors of lieder will want the set in spite of them.

The feature of the collection is the cycle *Vier ernste Gesänge*, which I like to think of as a sort of sonata for voice and piano. Except for the *Chorale Preludes* for organ (why doesn't some one record them?) these four great biblical songs are the composer's last

words to us, and they sum up the great humanity and understanding which were the marks of the real Brahms. A new recording was needed when this one was made. The Bampton version had never been satisfactory, even if one accepted the female voice, because of the lady's immaturity at the time they were made. The Kantorei discs of Paul Gümmer, always hard to obtain in this country, were beginning to show their age. They are certainly less imposing than those of Kipnis, though I think they come nearer the essence of the songs. Kipnis starts well, but grows rather too ponderous after the first song. The last of them, St. Paul's great message of faith, hope and love, comes off rather badly; its meaning gets lost in the shuffle. A new recording from France, sung by Doda Conrad of Nadia Boulanger's group (HMV DB 5052-53), matches Gümmer's simplicity of approach and benefits by superior reproduction. Conrad is not, as I fear Kipnis is, hampered by a great voice.

The first recordings in the set are three: *Verrat*, a potent song and to me the best of the Kipnis performances (but not quite "virtually unknown" as the booklet puts it), *Erinnerung* (Remembrance), a lovely and very Brahmsy song from whose title we may assume that the thematic resemblance to the finale of Mozart's *Viola Quintet in G minor* may not have been altogether an accident, and *Ein Sonett*, the inclusion of which will be almost enough to sell the set to those familiar with it.

An die Nachtigall exists only in an early electrical recording by Emmy Bettendorf, with one of those inexcusable dressed-up accompaniments. Most of the other songs have been done rather frequently, and all have been done better. *Von ewiger Liebe* for some reason wants a woman's voice, and we have it sung with far deeper understanding by Gerhardt. Nor has Kipnis the lightness and humor for such things as *Sonntag* (superbly done by Patzak), *Ständchen* or *Vergeliches Ständchen*; and he is rather heavy-handed in *O wüsst' ich doch den Weg zurück*.

Not the least attractive feature of the set is the presence of Gerald Moore, one of the best of accompanists. The recording is thoroughly satisfactory.

FAURE: *Requiem*; performed by Les Chanteurs de Lyon and Le Tringtuor Instrumental Lyonnais, under the direction of E. Bourmauck, with Edouard Commette, organ; Suzanne Dupont, soprano; and M.

Didier, bass. Columbia set 354, five discs, price \$7.50.

■ Fauré's *Requiem* is his biggest work so far on discs, and it is an encouraging sign that it has now reached its second recording. The American release of the new version is particularly welcome as the old Victor set has been withdrawn from the catalogue. There is no question, in any case, that it would now be superseded, so vastly superior is the reproduction of these new records.

The *Requiem* was composed in 1887, after the death of the composer's father. The first performance was given at the Madeleine in Paris, where Fauré was organist, in January 1888. The work represents a version of the magnificent and many-sided text, abbreviated and rearranged to suit the personality of the composer. There are certain ritualistic points (such as the omission of the second *Kyrie*) which may be open to question, and the *Dies irae* sequence has been omitted entirely. The mood is that of an outwardly calm acceptance of the inevitable, though a certain restless undercurrent tells us the secret of the composer's personal grief. That is not to say that this is personal music, as the music of Mahler or Tchaikowsky is personal. It is the expression of an exalted and timeless faith, the faith of a man whose personal sorrow was but the symbol of all earthly unhappiness.

The spirit of the great music is allowed to speak for itself in this performance. Not the least advantage of the new recording over the old is the fact that the words are easily distinguishable, and they are sung in a less disturbingly French Latin. Of course the choral tone is much fuller, and a great deal more is made of the few moments which border on the dramatic. The soloists are less satisfactory, on the whole, especially the soprano, who seems overwhelmed by the sheer beauty of the *Pie Jesu* melody. It would be difficult indeed to measure up to the fine singing of Mme. Malnory-Marseillac in the Victor version, and Mme. Dupont does not do so. Aside from the difficulty of capturing an entirely smooth reproduction of the organ bass, the recording has been excellently accomplished, and the surfaces are as smooth as anyone could desire.

HANDEL: *Atalanta - Care selve*; HAYDN: *The Creation - Tauben Arie*; sung by Eidé Noréna, soprano, with orchestra conducted by J. Messner. Victor disc, No. 15182, price \$2.00.

■ *Care selve* is beyond a doubt one of the

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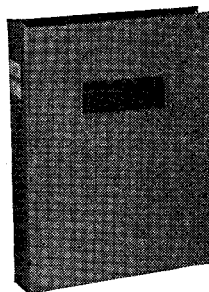
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severest tests any composer ever set a singer. Its long sustained phrases, its wide skips, and the endless poise which it demands are the despair if not the undoing of most vocalists. Mme. Noréna, whose rarified art is at last finding its way into the Victor catalogue, has just the gifts and the accomplishments for this kind of music, and with this disc she contributes the first satisfactory performance of the aria I have ever heard. The old acoustic records by Alma Gluck and John McCormack (both of which suffered from the use of the popular vacuous and misrepresentative English "translation") may now be discarded.

The *Tauben - Arie* from *The Creation* is better known in English as *On mighty wings uplifted*, although the German sung by Noréna is the original. One of the crying needs of recorded literature is a complete *Creation*, and the singing on this disc would indicate the ideal soprano for the project. It would be good to hear her in *With verdure clad*, although I am glad she chose the less familiar aria to record first.

The orchestra under Herr Messner gives fine support, and as in all the recent Noréna discs the recording is excellent.

LULLY: *Amadis de Gaule*—*Bois épais; Armide et Renaud* — *Plus j'observe ces lieux*; sung by Villabella, tenor; *Roland—Par le secours; Persée—O Mort!*; sung by Solange Renaux, soprano; all with orchestra conducted by Maurice Cauchie. Columbia set X-117, two discs, price \$3.50.

■ These four arias make a welcome addition to the none too plentiful repertoire of recorded Lully. They are performed in good style by two artists of distinction, and accompanied by a small orchestra which we may assume is a reasonably authentic one. The full scores of the operas are not available (the proposed complete edition of Lully does not yet contain them) so that it has not been possible to make a real check. However, the use of the harpsichord and the modesty of the instrumentation are reasonably good evidence.

Bois épais is certainly one of the best known Lully airs today, but it owes its popularity to an edition arranged by Amelia Lehmann (mother of Liza) some years ago, and this recording will contain some surprises for those who know it in that version. The graces and appoggiaturas with which A. L. smoothed the melody out are lacking, and I suppose the original text has been strictly adhered to (whether or not such strict adherence to the text is actually in the ancient tra-

dition). Among the discoveries in store for the listener to this recording is the genuine beauty of the accompaniment. *Plus j'observe ces lieux* has been known for some time in the recording of Yves Tinayre in the *Anthologie Sonore*. The air makes an interesting contrast to the setting of the same words from Gluck's *Armide*, which has also been recorded, by Joseph Rogatchewsky (Columbia LF 76). It is no disparagement of the charming setting of Lully to find a higher expressiveness in the later music of Gluck. Villabella's voice is a high and thin one, but decidedly pleasant as one grows used to it, and he sings with musicianship and taste.

The soprano airs are in marked contrast, *Par le secours* with its delightfully graceful line, and *O Mort!* which has a real dramatic quality. Mme. Renaud (assisted by a women's chorus in the first) sings in a pleasing and very French voice. The *Roland* air suits her the better, since that from *Persée* finds her voice a little light-weight for the composer's intentions. Her diction is none too clear. The recording in all four arias is good, and the surfaces are smooth. (For interested readers, there was a fine article on Lully in the August, 1938 issue of the *American Music Lover*.)

MOZART: *Don Giovanni*—*Il mio tesoro*; DONIZETTI: *L'Elisir d'Amore*—*Una furitiva lagrima*; sung by Richard Crooks, tenor, with orchestra conducted by Wilfred Pelletier. Victor disc, No. 15235, price \$2.00.

■ Some time ago, in reviewing one of Mr. Crooks' records, I remarked that he seemed to be taking over the old McCormack repertoire. While the music then under consideration was hardly in the same league with this, I am reminded of that remark: for this disc endeavors to replace John McCormack's masterpiece. Old-timers will not need to be reminded of the Irish tenor's 1916 recording of *Il mio tesoro*—a performance which set a standard in this aria that no other singer has equalled. A coupling was subsequently made with the same aria from *L'Elisir d'Amore* as Crooks sings for us here, the McCormack recording dating from 1910, and again unexcelled, except by the 1904 piano-accompanied Caruso.

In his singing of the Mozart Crooks certainly does as well as most tenors who have tried it, but the McCormack disc still seems to remain the record for all time. Crooks phrases the long passages more musically than any other recent singer I have heard—in this he is better than Pataky in the com-

plete *Don Giovanni* set, though in other respects his performance is less satisfactory. The quality of the voice is not quite that of the Crooks of ten years ago, and there is some lack of smoothness. The slow tempo is one which seems to be favored nowadays, though it renders the easy flow which distinguished the McCormack singing practically impossible; and there is a complete lack of intimacy, which is as much due to overamplification in recording as it is to the rather too open quality of the singing.

I have not followed all of the electrical recordings of *Una furtiva lagrima*, and those which I have heard have left me with no special impression. Therefore I suppose that this Crooks version will do as well as most. The same criticisms apply here as to openness and overamplification, and there is more than a suggestion of falsetto in the higher flights.

Mr. Pelletier's orchestra seems pretty well matched with the style of the singer.

• • •

PERUVIAN INDIAN MELODIES (Arr. d'Harcourt); sung by Ninon Vallin, soprano, with flute by LeRoy and harp by Jamet. Two ten-inch Columbia discs, Nos. P-4219-M, P-4220-M, price \$1.00 each.

■ Here is one of the real surprises of the year, and an exciting discovery for all who delight in the unusual or in simple charm. On listening to these native Peruvian melodies I was reminded of the first time I heard the Canteloube *Chants d'Auvergne* (Columbia records 7328M, 7249M, 7262M), and it occurred to me that anyone to whom Madeleine Grey's delightful performances appeal should have these of Ninon Vallin brought to his attention. The melodies are, naturally, quite different, and the treatment less elaborate, but the appeal is very much the same.

The songs — there are eight of them and two purely instrumental pieces — are taken from Marguerite Béchard d'Harcourt's *Mémoires populaires indiennes*, and are scored effectively for flute and harp. The various dialects in which they are sung seem to have a generous mixture of Spanish, and all sound in this performance delightfully vocal. Each song is very brief, and some of them are exquisitely beautiful. The ideas expressed are something like this. *Wasi-Wasinta*: I have looked for you from door to door. There is not a woman like you, Katatcha. *Sencecito, palma verde*: (He) Little branch of green willow, see my bondage. Why does my cruel mistress continue to hold me?

(She) It is not unmixed joy to withhold the good of another, but in knowing how to help oneself one plays more than the master. *Ama pisko mikunkicus*: Stay away from my princess' field, little ostrich, do not eat the sweet white maize. *Tupucito Vata*: I am looking for you, my friend, how can I live without you? *Mariposacay, ninacay*: You are like a frail butterfly, an agile locust — I think of you always. *Aa, sumak*: Dazzling light of the magical sun, shine upon thy children gathered together and enlighten them. *De aquel cerro verde*: The sheep are coming down the green mountains.

The two instrumental numbers (comprising side 2) are a love song and a dance.

It would be hardly possible to overpraise the performance by Mme. Vallin, M. LeRoy and M. Jamet. All are artists preeminent in their fields, and each is at his very best in this recording. I am sure there is a public waiting for such striking and unusual music as this, and I think Columbia should be thanked for recognizing it.

• • •

RUBINSTEIN: *The Prisoner*; and Gypsy Song: *Black Eyes*: sung by Feodor Chaliapin, basso, the former with piano accompaniment by Jean Bazilevsky, and the latter with the Aristoff Choir and balalaika orchestra. Victor disc, No. 15236, price \$2.00.

■ In reviewing the recording career of Chaliapin recently in this magazine, I mentioned this record as one which I had not had the opportunity of hearing. It may possibly be the last release of the great Russian's singing—at any rate it is one of the last, and is welcome for that if for no other reason. But the Rubinstein song is reason enough in itself, for it is an interesting one and excellently done. The text is a dramatic one by Poushkin: The prisoner looks out from his cell, and sees an eagle flapping his wings, apparently calling to him to fly away. It is time, reflects the prisoner, and sits within his cell. The song is a graphic rather than a melodious one, and there will be many lovers of "what they know" to whom it will not appeal. To others, I believe, once they know the meaning of the song, the glorious voice and the dramatic accents of the singing will bring a new thrill. There are descriptive touches, too, in the piano accompaniment.

It is curious to find *Ochi chornia* among the songs of the great Chaliapin, and for once, it seems to me, he is not quite "in the groove." I have always enjoyed the extremely racy recording of this song by Pola Negri (Victor V-73) and compared to it Chaliapin's

sounds a bit tame. It may very well be sung in better Russian here—I cannot answer for that—but the song will take all the suggestion the singer can give it. I'm afraid Chaliapin's is more of a curiosity than a complete success.

The recording of the Rubinstein is excellent, but that of *Black Eyes* has a muffled quality which would indicate age.

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TELEMANN: *Die rechte Stimmung; Wechsel; Glück*; BEETHOVEN: *Der Abschied; Der Kuss*; sung by Ernst Wolff, baritone, accompanying himself at the piano. Tenth-inch Columbia disc, No. 4210-M, price \$1.00.

■ Ernst Wolff's latest recording brings varied and worth-while fare. The songs of Telemann will prove a pleasant surprise to many, for they have real point and a charmingly melodious wit. *Die rechte Stimmung*, otherwise known as *Das Frauenzimmer*, is the most famous of the three—a sparkling little tidbit about the inability of men and women to understand each other. *Wechsel*, a more substantial song, is about the changes of life which bring us nearer our end. *Glück* is a spirited bit of philosophy, telling us that fortune seldom comes on a post horse, but usually on foot, step by step. The idea is illustrated in the music by the jogging six-eight of the first phrase, and the contrasting sustained notes of the answering one.

Beethoven's *Abschied*, or more properly *La partenza*, is a setting of a verse by Metastasio, composed probably about 1798. It is a simple melody with the most unpretentious kind of an accompaniment, no doubt owing some of its smooth and gentle grace to the original Italian text. The German, however, fits it well enough, and the little song has quite the sound of a genuine lied. The sentiment is the old one of the sadness of parting, and the hope that the singer will be remembered. *Der Kuss* is a very different matter. This song, to words by C. F. Weisse, dates from December, 1822, and is Beethoven's opus 128. Much brighter and slyer than we expect the music of this master to be, the song is at once a good example of his weakness in this type of music, and a delightful little encore. Chloe is alone with her swain, who wants to kiss her. She tells him that if he does so she will scream. He kisses her, and she does scream—but long afterwards. Because of the musical conventions which governed the writing of the little ariette, the

effect is somewhat dulled by repetitions and extensions at the end.

Mr. Wolff is in his best form on this record. I most enjoyed his playing in *Der Kuss*, where is treatment of the final chord adds a final touch of humor. The recording is very good.

• • •

WILLIAMS: *Serenade to Music*; sung by sixteen famous British singers, with the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Sir Henry J. Wood. Columbia set X-121, two discs, price \$3.50.

■ Last October Sir Henry J. Wood celebrated his fiftieth year of musical activity in England, and on the fifth of that month a gala concert was broadcast so that listeners throughout the nation could join in the festive and sentimental occasion. The most significant feature of the program was this *Serenade to Music*, especially composed as a tribute to Sir Henry by Ralph Vaughan Williams, and sung by a choir of sixteen of England's most distinguished native singers, all of whom are personal friends of the conductor. This recording perpetuates their performance, and, personal interest aside, provides the opportunity to hear and study the latest work of one of Britain's most gifted composers.

Being a *pièce d'occasion*, the *Serenade to Music* was written with the present performers in mind, and the composer has carefully provided each of them with a bit of a solo. But unlike so much occasional music the *Serenade* has artistic value too. The text is the passage beginning "How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank," from the fifth act of *The Merchant of Venice*. Apparently the composer's intentions were not so much to set these lines to music, as to use them as the occasion for a musical mood. Therefore, though some of the poetry comes through in all its unrivalled beauty, there is a good deal of it which does not. Some of it, like "The man that hath no music in himself," seems strangely ill adapted to musical setting: for my own part I haven't the faintest idea how it should be done, but I am quite sure that Vaughan Williams has not found the definitive setting here. The music has the authentic Williams touch—it has atmosphere. But even though the performance presumably has the composer's approval, I am afraid that some of this atmosphere has evaporated in this recording. I suppose a gathering of sixteen well-known soloists might be expected to give a straight performance rather than a subtle one, and that is just what happens here. Of *pianissimo* there is none and little enough shading of any kind. And not too

much attention has been paid the matter of balance. This chorus is a "stunt" and they sing in that spirit. The names of the singers are as follows: Isobel Baillie, Stiles-Allen, Elsie Suddaby, Eva Turner, Astra Desmond, Margaret Balfour, Muriel Brunskill, Mary Jarred, Heddle Nash, Walter Widdop, Parry Jones, Frank Titterton, Roy Henderson, Robert Easton, Harold Williams and Norman Allin.

The orchestra plays expertly as usual, and with more nuance than we find in the singing. Perhaps overpowerful recording is responsible for the generally too high dynamic level. The surfaces of the discs are quiet.

P. M.

Templeton's Album

Alec Templeton in a Collection of his Musical Impressions, Satires, and Improvisations. Four 10-inch discs in album, price \$5.00. Available from The Gramophone Shop.

■ Musical satire is a rare thing. The French music-hall performer Bétové has given us some clever bits of humor on records, but even he, as genuinely clever and funny as he is, is completely eclipsed by the art of Alec Templeton. A young Englishman, handicapped by blindness, Templeton is undoubtedly able to make his satirical sketches much more successful because of his affliction, for completely submerged within himself he is able to change from character to character undisturbed by the audience assembled about him.

Templeton has been starred on the radio, most recently with Bing Crosby's Kraft Music Hall. He is also appearing at the Rainbow Room at Rockefeller Center in New York. In his impersonations, Templeton sings all the various voices — bass, contralto, tenor and soprano. Perhaps nothing funnier of its kind has ever been done than *The Shortest Wagnerian Opera* in which he goes through the *Ring*, *Tristan* and *Lohengrin* in three minutes. His imitations of barking and wobbling Wagnerian singers, of shrieking sopranos and throat-clutching tenors, are side splitting. His impressions of *Old-Fashioned Italian Grand Opera* is another riotously funny affair. But perhaps one of the funniest of all to those who have studied music will be the *Trip Through a Music Conservatory*.

Mr. Templeton is a gifted pianist and his improvisations on various tunes are as engaging and clever as his satirical sketches.

His recordings here are: (1) *Impressions of Old Fashioned Italian Opera*; (2) *A Trip*

Through a Music Conservatory; (3) *The Shortest Wagnerian Opera*; (4) *Impressions of Two Lieder Singers*; (5) *The Lost Chord*; (6) *An Amateur Performance of Gilbert and Sullivan*; (7) *The Music Goes 'Round and Around*, as it might have been written by Mozart, Johann Strauss and Handel; and (8) *Improvisation on Five Varied Melodies*.

—P. H. R.

Speech

SHAKESPEARE: *Hamlet* — *O that this too too solid flesh; O, what a rogue and peasant slave; To be, or not to be; and How all occasions*; spoken by Maurice Evans. Columbia set 340, two discs, price \$4.50.

■ Mr. Evans' performance of *Hamlet* is one of the great achievements of the 1938-1939 season in New York. This sterling actor brings to his impersonations of Shakespearean roles a welcome exuberance, a warm humanity — the old stilted, rhetorical style of performance is abandoned. It is not the poetry that lives first with Mr. Evans but the character itself. Here, as in his *Richard II*, Mr. Evans makes us first and foremost aware of the tragic figure of Hamlet rather than of Shakespeare's verse. This it not to say that he has not the style or the diction to do the poetry notable justice, but to commend him the more for his superb artistry. Mr. Evans has much less voice than most great Shakespearean actors have had, so he does not rely on the sound of his voice to provide the principal thrill in his performance. One is conscious of a superbly focused brain behind his words, the grip of an acutely alive mentality; his is the true impersonation of the character. It lives because he lives the part.

The four scenes chosen from the play are high points in the drama, the first being from Act 1, Scene 2; the second from Act 2, Scene 2; the third from Act 3, Scene 1; and the last from Act 4, Scene 4. In the first three scenes Hamlet alone is heard, but in the last scene his conversation with the Captain precedes his speech. The recordings have been effectively realized. The use of a faint, almost inaudible organ accompaniment in the background seems quite in keeping with the play. Evans is genuinely thrilling in these excerpts, and all who have seen him in the play and enjoyed it will find these recordings realistic souvenirs of his art.

—P. H. R.

Correspondence

To the American Music Lover.

You may be interested to know in the three weeks since the Ad appeared I have disposed of over 150 records, over two-thirds of this directly traceable to AML readers from California, Oklahoma, Utah, Washington, D. C., New York City, etc.

—D. B. Rost, Boston, Mass.

* * *

To the American Music Lover.

Just to keep the record straight, Alfro Poli, who sings Marcello in the new Boheme set, is not new to records. He will be remembered for his fine performance of Don Pasquale in the Victor set.

Please use your influence, if you will, to have Columbia issue the *Favorita* and *Elisir d'Amore* sets in this country.

—Dr. W. G. Wright, Detroit.

RECORD SALES AND EXCHANGES

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Chamber Music Contest

Winning Lists

■ LAST MONTH WE WERE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE winners of the Chamber Music Contest. The prize lists are given below.

Many otherwise excellent lists had to be rejected because they included works commonly considered orchestral rather than chamber music. It was unanimously agreed by the judges that no list could be a winning one without Schubert's *C major Quintet*, one of the most beautiful works of its kind ever written. The winning lists succeed, in our opinion, in offering a remarkable selection of true chamber music in a wide range of styles and performances. Mr. Baxter's list was seriously considered for the first prize, but its lone weakness, the inclusion of the Franck quintet, kept it from that ward. It is unusual, however, for the amazing variety of instrumental combinations represented—and every one a thoroughly representative work of its composer. Mr. Kline's list speaks for itself, and we think our readers will agree that it is a winner.

FIRST PRIZE LIST

With comments by Mr. Kline.

1. HAYDEN: *Quartet in C Major, Op. 33, No. 3* ("Bird"), Roth String Quartet. Columbia Set No. 257.

I have selected this comparatively early quartet, not because I consider it Haydn's supreme achievement in this field—although in charm and grace it is unsurpassed by any of his others—but because it is an outstanding phonograph version, both in interpretation and in recording, not excelled by any in the Haydn Quartet Society Series.

2. MOZART: *Quintet in G Minor, K. 516*, Pro Arte Quartet and A. Hobday. Victor Set M-190.

No other chamber work portrays more fully Mozart's peculiar blend of inexhaustible melody, technical skill, freshness, delicacy, and underlying profundity of thought and feeling.

3. BEETHOVEN: *Quartet No. 7 in F Major, Op. 59, No. 1* ("Rasoumovsky" No. 1), Roth String Quartet. Columbia Set No. 256.

In the three "Rasoumovsky" Quartets, Beethoven is at the peak of his creative power, during his middle period. My choice has been the first of this group, but either of the others could be substituted with equal right, since all are equal in quality and good recordings exist of each.

4. BEETHOVEN: *Quartet No. 14 in C Sharp Minor, Op. 131*, Busch Quartet. Victor Set M-369.

A choice from the last quartets is a difficult one, as either Op. 130, 131, or 132 would be fully acceptable. My preference is for the C Sharp Minor, especially as done so excellently by the Busch group. Few works of music have ever approached so lofty a plane as this.

5. SCHUBERT: *Quintet in C Major, Op. 163*. Pro Arte Quartet and Anthony Pini. Victor Set M-299.

In this eloquent and rarely beautiful work is revealed the very quintessence of Schubert's genius. To set forth his highest achievement in this field, one does not need the addition of any of his other chamber works.

6. SCHUMANN: *Piano Quintet in E Flat Major*, Op. 44, Artur Schnabel and Pro Arte Quartet. Victor Set M-267.

This is one of the foremost works for piano and strings, and the most attractive of Schumann's chamber music composition.

7. BRAHMS: *Clarinet Quintet in B Minor*, Op. 115, Reginald Kell and Busch Quartet. Victor Set M-491.

Brahms is at his best in works incorporating other instruments with the strings. In none of his music is there more profound and satisfying music than in this quintet.

8. BRAHMS: *Horn Trio in E Flat Major*, Op. 40, Adolph Busch, Aubrey Brain and Rudolph Serkin. Victor Set M-199.

In picking this trio, I have departed from the general basis of selection I have outlined below; but I believe that its unique and almost hypnotic charm, which cannot be found in any other chamber music work, entitles it to a place among the finest compositions in this field.

9. DEBUSSY: *Quartet in G Minor*, Op. 10, Pro Arte Quartet. Victor Set M-186.

10. BARTOK: *Quartet No. 2 in A Minor*, Op. 17, Budapest Quartet. Victor Set M-320.

11. BLOCH: *Piano Quartet*, Alfred Casella and Pro Arte Quartet. Victor Set M-191.

12. MALAPIERO: *Cantari alla Madrigalesca*, Roma String Quartet. Victor Nos. 12329-12330.

These four works represent the principal tendencies in modern chamber music. Also, each one of them seems to be assured, through its own intrinsic merits and attractiveness, of a permanent place in the chamber music repertoire.

The field of chamber music is, of course, much wider than this list would indicate. However, since the string quartet is generally conceded to be the most perfect instrumental combination, it seems to me most satisfactory to select the nucleus for a chamber music library mainly from works written for such a group, with the inclusion of some closely allied compositions incorporating a fifth instrument. In only one instance, the Brahms *Horn Trio*, have I departed from this principle. Starting from such a basis, one is able at will to develop his collection so as to include the many attractive works for a greater or smaller number of instruments, or for different instrumental combinations.

Although many of the instrumental works of earlier musical periods come within the scope of chamber music in the broadest sense, the symmetry and perfect organization which chiefly characterize true chamber music were not developed until the last half of the eighteenth century. For this reason, I believe that such a list as this must necessarily begin with Haydn, and that none of the works of Bach, Handel, Byrd, Purcell, Corelli, and their contemporaries and predecessors, despite all their charm and skill, properly deserves inclusion here.

SECOND PRIZE LIST

With comments by Mr. Baxter.

1. PURCELL: *The Golden Sonata*. Jean Pasquier and P. Ferret (violins) with Ruggero Gerlin (harpsichord) and Etienne Pasquier ('cello). Anthologie

Sonore disc No. 22. A splendid performance of a splendid work.

2. BACH: *Sonata No. 2 for flute and harpsichord*. Georges Barrere and Yella Pessl. Victor disc 14619. Delightful music impeccably performed and reproduced.

3. HAYDN: *Quartet in F Minor*, Op. 20 No. 5. Roth Quartet. Columbia Set No. 228. The father of the modern quartet form at his best, and not even the Pro Arte four can do it better than the Roths.

4. MOZART: *String Trio in E Flat*, K. 563. The Pasquier Trio. Pathé discs 38 to 42. One of the peaks of Mozart's genius, gloriously youthful music yet completely mature in workmanship and form. Another reason for including it here is the incomparable musicianship of the Pasquier brothers.

5. BEETHOVEN: *Quartet in C Sharp Minor*, Op. 131. Busch Quartet. Victor Set M-369. This music is indescribable, but if this list were reduced to one work instead of twelve, this would be it.

6. SCHUBERT: *Quintet in C Major*, Op. 163 Victor Set M-299. Pro Arte Quartet and Anthony Pini, second 'cello. Here is some of the most beautiful music anybody can ever hope to hear, here or hereafter.

7. SCHUMANN: *Sonata in D Minor*, for violin and piano. Yehudi and Hephzibah Menuhin. Victor Set M-233. A virtually ideal performance of a richly romantic work.

8. BRAHMS: *Quintet for Clarinet and Strings*. Reginald Kell and Budapest String Quartet. Victor Set M-491. This fantastic and evocative work is acknowledged as Brahms' finest chamber work, if not his greatest in any form. This presentation of it is admirable in every respect.

9. FRANCK: *Quintet in F Minor*. E. Robert Schmitz, piano and the Roth Quartet. Columbia Set 334. Not quite an ideal performance (sharper rhythms would give it the virility it needs to offset the mysticism of its dark recesses), this nevertheless is the most satisfactory recording available and it seems to me that the work deserves to be included, not only because it is a bridge between the romantic and modern periods but because the sound of the piano and strings here is blended to an enchanting aural beauty.

10. DEBUSSY: *Quartet in G Minor*. The Pro Arte Quartet. Victor Set M-186. This is the modern classic of quartets although it stands alone in the composer's output. Music could hardly be more irresistible than is its first movement.

11. BARTOK: *Quartet No. 2, in A Minor*, Op. 17. Budapest String Quartet. Victor Set M-320. Most of us would have a hard time proving that this quartet is in A Minor or any other key, but it is a fine work. The final adagio seems to be akin to the late Beethoven and much more could be said for it if that were not sufficient.

12. HARRIS: *Concerto*, Op. 2.; Harry Cumpson, piano; Aaron Gorodner, clarinet; and the Aeolian String Quartet. Columbia Set 281. I have no hesitation including this chamber concerto, nor have I done so simply in order to get an American in. There is more meat in it than in a dozen polished Paris quartets; it is moving, energetic, and powerful, and its formal innovations are innovations, not whimsy. It proves that there is a future for chamber music.

Swing Music Notes

Enzo Archetti

■ THE FIRST AMERICAN ELLINGTON CONCERT AT CITY College was a grand success. While it did not live up to all that was expected of it because, no doubt, of haphazard planning and because it did not follow the announced program it was, nevertheless, an all Ellington program which, in itself, was sufficient. It served to prove what all his followers have maintained for years—that in Ellington we have the most vital composer America has ever produced; not just a jazz composer but an American composer with ideas and technique to back them.

In this reviewer's opinion about one quarter of the program could have been eliminated in favor of more substantial music. Even Ellington is not above criticism. He writes more than his share of pot-boilers: catch-penny pieces to please a superficial public. We could easily have been spared such tripe as *Trumpet in Spades*, *Sophisticated Lady*, etc. But in all fairness it must be reported that the concert was interesting, exciting, and a good cross-section of all Ellington has done, from his earliest works to his latest. It proved once more that Ellington is at his best when he writes slowly and when he permits the real Negro spirit to pervade his work. His early *East St. Louis Toodle-o* and *Creole Love Call* and his later *Azure* and *Echoes of Harlem* are products of the real Ellington.

The program promised some numbers from the opera Ellington has been writing for the last few years. That was the sharpest disappointment of the evening. They were not played. But that was compensated for by a brilliant performance of *Reminiscing in Tempo*, which upheld every contention made for it in these columns. This remains Ellington's most ambitious work and his most intellectual. It will never be his most popular because it is so completely different from what is expected of him but it will probably be his most important contribution to American music.

A word should be said about the audience that attended the Ellington concert. It was seventy-five per cent Negro and as perfectly serious and well behaved as a Philharmonic audience. It was an audience that was there to listen and appreciate. No scatter-brained high school kids and no jitter-bugs.

The new Columbia—C.B.S. tie-up is having its effect in the jazz world also. John Hammond has been retained as advisor. The first result of this in the recording field is a three-record Vocalion album to be released shortly. It will be an all boogie-woogie piano release—six sides of original stuff by Ammons, Mead Lux Lewis and Pete Johnson. All indications seem to point to an early switch-over of Count Basie from Decca to Columbia. Basie's contract is up for renewal in a few weeks.

But Freeman is now rehearsing an orchestra of eleven men. The line-up is not yet definite except for Joe Bushkin on piano. But lost Max Kaminsky

to Jack Teagarden. The embryo orchestra may have a hotel opening on the east side of New York. The arranger for the band is an unknown Negro from Harlem who writes Bud's style perfectly.

Jack Teagarden has definitely left Paul Whiteman and has now formed his own orchestra. With him went his brother, Charlie. The personnel has not yet been made public but it is known that besides Jack and Charlie there are Max Kaminsky on trumpet and Carceres on alto sax and clarinet. The band is scheduled for a six-weeks spot in Minneapolis.

To fill the openings in the Whiteman band, Frank Signorelli, Miff Mole, George Whettnling and Artie Shapiro have been taken on.

Commodore will shortly issue an all-Willie Smith album. Five records—mostly original compositions.

There is some talk that Bunny Berigan is not doing too well with his own band: that shortly

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BUSONI: *Sonatina (ad usum infantis)*. Disc 23.

BUSONI: *Sonatina (In Diem Nativitatis Christi (MCMXVII))*. Disc 24.

Both played by Michael Zadora

SCRIABINE: *Piano Sonata No. 4 in F sharp major, Opus 30*. Katherine Ruth Heyman. Disc 20.

CLEMENTI: *Piano Sonata in B flat Major, Opus 47, No. 2 (3 sides)*; HAESSLER: *Grande Gigue (1 side)*. Arthur Loesser. Discs 21-22.

HAYDN: *Sonata in F major (No. 20 in Peter's Edition)*. Arthur Loesser. Disc 19.

BRAHMS: *Piano Sonata No. 2 in F sharp minor, Opus 2*. Arthur Loesser. Discs 15, 16 and 17, in album, 50 cents extra.

CLEMENTI: *Piano Sonata in G minor, Op. 50, No. 3 (Didone Abbandone)*. Arthur Loesser. Discs 13 and 14.

CHARLES T. GRIFFES: *Piano Sonata*. Harrison Potter. Discs 10 and 11.

ERNEST BLOCH: *Five Sketches in Sepia*. Harrison Potter. Disc 12.

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he will break it up and that he will join Benny Goodman, replacing Harry James, who has left to form his own band . . . Jimmy Johnson is writing music for a new show which has been described as a kind of Negro carbon copy of *Pins and Needles*. Nearly all the music is in the blues idiom and those who have heard some samples say it is first rate and some of the best Jimmy has done for years. . . . Leo Watson is back with the *Spirits of Rhythm* at Kelly's Stables. . . . Tow hot jazz versions of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado* are in the making and scheduled for Broadway. Fletcher Henderson is entirely responsible for one of them.

As the magazine was going to press we received word that Hugues Parnassié, the French jazz writer and critic now visiting America, had been rushed to the Harlem Eye, Ear and Throat Hospital in serious condition from a streptococci infection of the throat. At the time of admission to the hospital death was considered imminent, but the latest report states that there has been some improvement in his condition and that he has a fair chance of recovery.

In the Popular Vein

Horace Van Norman

Standard Popular

AAAA—*A Debutante's Diary*, and *Neurotic Goldfish*.
Alec Wilder Octet. Brunswick 8294.

■ There is more than a tinge of surrealism here, both in title and in content, but it is extremely ingenious and amusing stuff, more original, in fact, than anything that's come along since the rocket-like rise of the Raymond Scott Quintet. There is nothing that is the least bit imitative of Scott in anything but the titles, although this group, like the Quintet, emanates from the C. B. S. studios in New York, and the numbers employ a certain type of harmonic sophistication that seems peculiarly the property of Columbia house arrangers. That these are more than diabolically clever instrumental stunts I would not for a moment claim. But sheer cleverness for its own sake is occasionally to be welcomed and this is about as clever as anything you could imagine. Apparently Mr. Wilder has ideas that are more or less entirely his own, and with the assistance of a superb little ensemble of studio-toilers, he is enabled to present them with a high degree of effectiveness. Conspicuous in both numbers is a constant use of harpsichord (played with surprising competence by Walter Gross, that amazing pianist), oboe and bassoon. The harpsichord is utilized far more persuasively than in any similar attempt that I know of and the works as a whole present some entirely new sonorities, no easy task with as small a group as this one. The total effect is of someone saying something of no very great importance, but saying it extremely wittily.

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(Continued on Inside Back Cover)

AAAA—*Night and Day*, and *It Ain't Necessarily So*. Maxine Sullivan and Orchestra. Victor 26132.

■ After a succession of rather unfortunate discs, Maxine comes back in highly creditable fashion with these two. *It Ain't Necessarily So* is possibly as well suited to her highly personal style as anything she has ever done, and *Night and Day* is not far from it in all-around excellence. The supporting orchestra follows nicely in the Claude Thornhill tradition, Thornhill being presently employed in California by Skinnay Ennis, and the disc represents a very substantial comeback (at least as far as records are concerned) on the part of this interesting artist.

AAA—*Midnight On the Trail*, and *Hawaiian War Chant*. Tommy Dorsey and his Orchestra. Victor 26126.

■ *Hawaiian War Chant*, after being kicked around for the past couple of years by numberless Hawaiian and pseudo-Hawaiian bands, under the title of *Pa-hu-wa-hu-wai*, now comes gloriously into its own as a magnificent swingeroo at the hands of Dorsey and his capable band. The inevitable infiltration of American jazz into native Hawaiian music has resulted in a curiously hybrid product that goes under the name of Hawaiian music these days, but this one is really something and Dorsey does the definitive version of it, of course.

AAA—*September Song*, and *It Never Was You*. Eddy Duchin and his Orchestra. Brunswick 8287.

■ Attractive recordings of the two most melodious numbers from the pallid *Knickerbocker Holiday* score of Kurt Weill. Duchin's treatment brings out the best qualities of both tunes and Stanley Worth's vocals are thoroughly first-class.

AAA—*Deep Purple*, and *A Study in Red*. Larry Clinton and his Orchestra. Victor 26141.

■ Peter de Rose's *Deep Purple*, after these many years of solitary splendor as a Whiteman twelve-incher, is finally being taken up by the dance bands, and why it has been neglected for so long we can't imagine. A luscious tune beautifully adapted to dance-band arrangement, apparently only the lack of a song lyric prevented it from the really solid success that it now seems to be attaining. We shouldn't be surprised if it developed into another *My Reverie*. The lyrics of one are as bad as the other. Its range of an octave and a half will make it virtually unsingable by most of the dance band warblers. Its title is highly uncommercial. Therefore it ought to be a terrific hit. Clinton, who has launched his share of hits the past season or so, does a creditable enough job on it.

AAA—*Bric-a-brac*, and *Pavane*. Phil Lang and his Orchestra. Brunswick 8286.

■ Easily one of the most talented figures among younger American composers and arrangers is Morton Gould. *Pavane* is one movement from his *American Symphonette No. 1* and a highly attractive and effective little conceit it is, too. On the face of it, a pavane in swing time is about as glaring an anomaly as could well be imagined, but this work of Gould's is both good pavane and good swing. Hats off to Mr. Gould and to the excellent Phil Lang combination (another C. B. S. unit) for a really charming and distinctive bit of musical Americana.

Hot Jazz

AAAA—*Bach Goes to Town*, and *Whispering*. Benny Goodman and his Orchestra. Victor 26130.

■ This has turned out to be one of the most widely discussed records of recent months. Apparently the mere idea of a swing fugue has proven highly

iconoclastic to a great many worthy souls, which is rather strange since it should have been evident to even the most obtuse of observers that a very real kinship has always existed between the contrapuntal music of Bach and his contemporaries on the one hand and what has been variously known as hot jazz or swing on the other. Unfortunately, *Bach Goes to Town* is not a very good fugue, even though it be the product of Alec Templeton, that phenomenally gifted person, thus it does not serve as an ideal illustration of this kinship. It is, however, a step in the right direction and we believe it may well be the first in a series of similar attempts to demonstrate the essentially classic and contrapuntal nature of jamming. And if these attempts are at all successful, we may be witnessing the birth of the next great epoch in music. We sincerely trust that this doesn't sound ponderous and it certainly isn't inspired by anything on this record but it's something to think about, anyway.

AAAA—*Blue Light*, and *Slap Happy*. Duke Ellington and his Orchestra. Brunswick 8297.

■ *Blue Light* is the contemplative, melancholic, introspective Ellington at his most typical, and if constant readers of this column (if any) don't recognize this as about the highest praise we find it possible to bestow on a record, they should be made to stay after school and write the sentence "Ellington is a great man" one thousand times. For Ellington's work will remain long after most of his contemporaries of small talent have passed into the limbo of forgotten things, and it is inspirations like *Blue Light* that make him the untouchable figure that he is, as unsurpassable in his own field as his dear friend, Joe Louis, is in the province of swat.

AAA—*Lullaby (Berceuse) from Jocelyn*, and *The Kerry Dancers*. Larry Clinton and his Orchestra. Victor 26127.

■ *Kerry Dancers* is one of those swung classics (if *Kerry Dancers* in its original form merits the appellation) that just doesn't jell. You never can tell just how a tune is going to swing until you try it, but we don't see why Clinton didn't ditch this one after seeing how poorly it allowed itself to be adapted to swing treatment. The venerable *Berceuse* from *Jocelyn* turns out very much better, oddly enough, and makes a welcome addition to the practically interminable list of such concoctions stemming from the fertile pen of Clinton.

AAA—*It Had To Be You*, and *Louise*. Benny Goodman and his Orchestra. Victor 26125.

■ Good examples of how to swing the oldies and still not annihilate the original tunes.

OTHER CURRENT RECORDINGS OF MERIT

AAA—*As Long As You Live*, and *When the Saints Go Marching In*. Louis Armstrong and his Orchestra. Decca 2230.

AAA—*Tain't What You Do*, and *Cheatin' On Me*. Jimmie Lunceford and his Orchestra. Vocalion 4582.

AAA—*Don't Try Your Five On Me*, and *Havin' a Ball*. Fats Waller and his Rhythm. Bluebird B-10100.

AAA—*Frankie and Johnny*, and *You're Mine*. Ethel Waters. Bluebird B-10038.

AAA—*Just a Kid Named Joe*, and *The Lonesome Road*. Bing Crosby. Decca 2257.

AA—*It's Gettin' Kinda Chilly*, and *Sweet Safronia*. Slim and Slam.

AA—*Bublitchki*, and *Fralich in Swing*. Ziggy Elman and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-10103.

AA—*My Heart Belongs to Daddy*, and *Sing for Your Supper*. Count Basie and his Orchestra. Decca 2249.

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